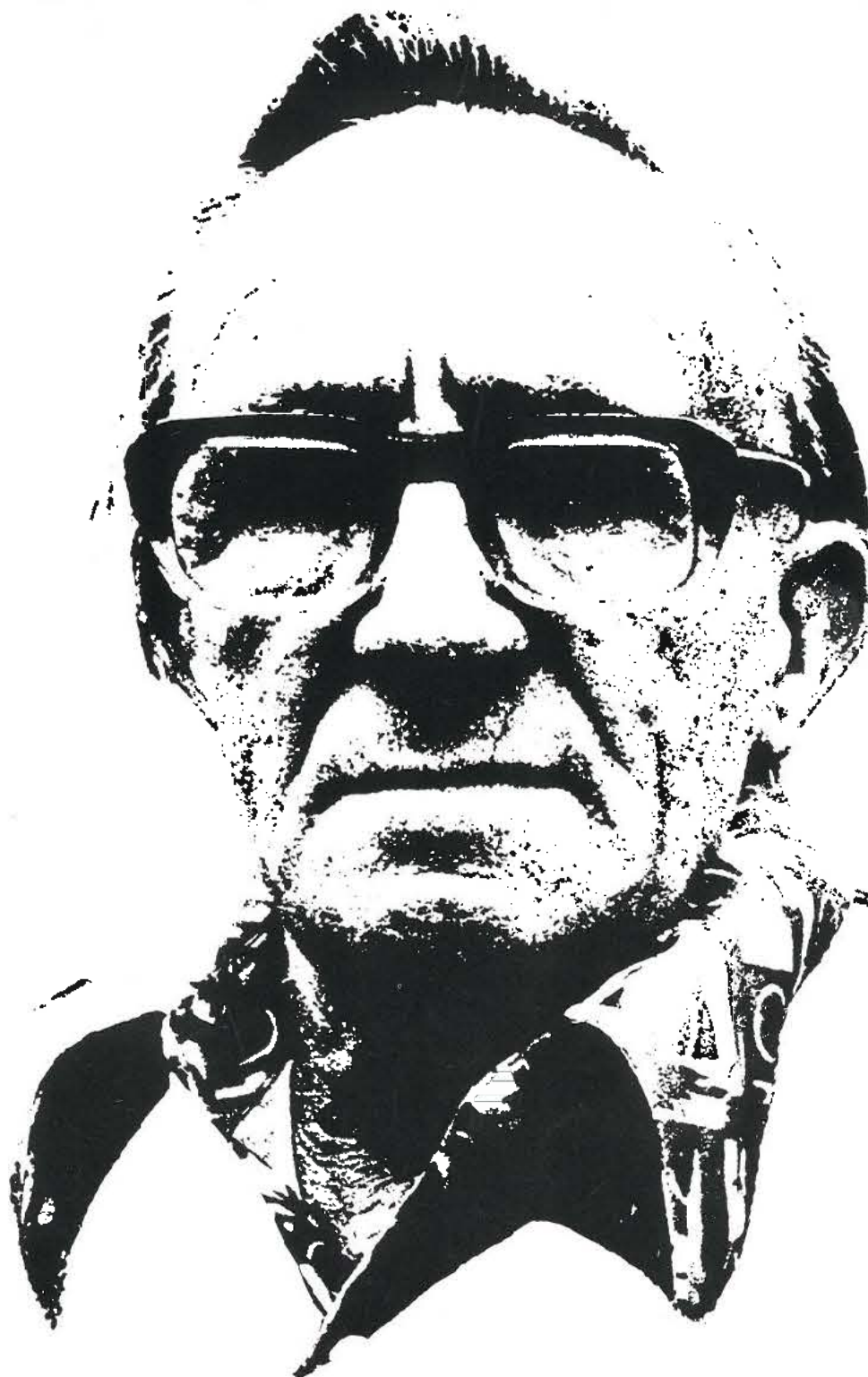


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When the Buck Stops.

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H81W

I decided to write this letter as well as filling in the form.

I am pleased that someone is trying to do something to help the older generation.

I had written to the Minister of Housing and the buck was passed onto the Housing Commission. (Then) I went to see them, and they said there was no hope of getting a place to let! (There are long waiting lists.)

The Government seems to think that when people get to my age it is time to put them in one room and throw away the key. They don't know what agony they go through.

I only feel about 40.

I am so full of anger and sometimes I feel there is not much point going on.

I am pleased to see there is someone out there that cares, and if you want to use any of this in your booklet please do so.

I wish you success.

Wynn.

(A respondent to our Survey of Aged person's housing needs and preferences.)

About This Booklet

This booklet has been produced by the Housing For the Aged Action Group. Our Group covers the Westernport Region and is a self help group made up of Aged renters who are faced with the high cost of renting privately whilst waiting on public housing. Our aim is for more and better public rental housing for the Aged.

Our hope is that our booklet will provide an insight into the plight of aged renters forced to compete on the private rental market because of the shortage of low cost public housing. Our concern is that successive Federal Government Budgets have done little to bring any significant relief to our plight. That is why we called our book "When the Buck Stops".

This booklet has been produced with the assistance of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence who provided a \$1,500 grant for printing, Vicki Hill who spent hours producing the photographs of us, David Williams who helped with art-work and layout and the Westernport Regional Housing council who initiated and auspiced the project.

Special thanks must go to Maureen Cunningham from Monash University's Social Work Department - Maureen's research into the needs and preferences of aged renters on the Ministry's waiting lists for the Peninsula area, provided much material for the text of our Booklet. We also wish to thank the Ministry of Housing Management and staff at the Dandenong and

Frankston offices, Australian Council on the Ageing, and Rosemary Calder, Monash University, Social Work Department, Sue Preston of the Frankston 'News' and the Ministry of Housing Community Housing Programme who all helped in various ways to make the research project happen.

To obtain material for the text, Maureen Cunningham worked with us to design a structured questionnaire focusing on the specific factors of cost and security, as well as elderly persons' preferences about Housing. The sample population was drawn from Ministry of Housing Elderly persons waiting lists covering Chelsea, Koo-wee-rup, Lang Lang, Flinders/Rosebud, Frankston, Hastings, Mordialloc, Mornington, Phillip Island and Wonthaggi. Every second person on the list was surveyed. The response was tremendous, 41% of Questionnaires were returned, many with expressions of interest in our group, and our project and many with thanks for "doing something" about the problem.

The part of the text relating specifically to the photographs was written by us - members of the Housing for the Aged Action Group.

Housing for the Aged Action Group
P.O. Box 211
Mornington 3931

September, 1984.

Survey Responses

"I shall have to leave when the rent is increased next."

"(I have) been in a caravan, having to shower outside and now living in this bungalow is very cold, shower is unsatisfactory and toilets outside and too far from the bungalow. Very hard on me being crippled."

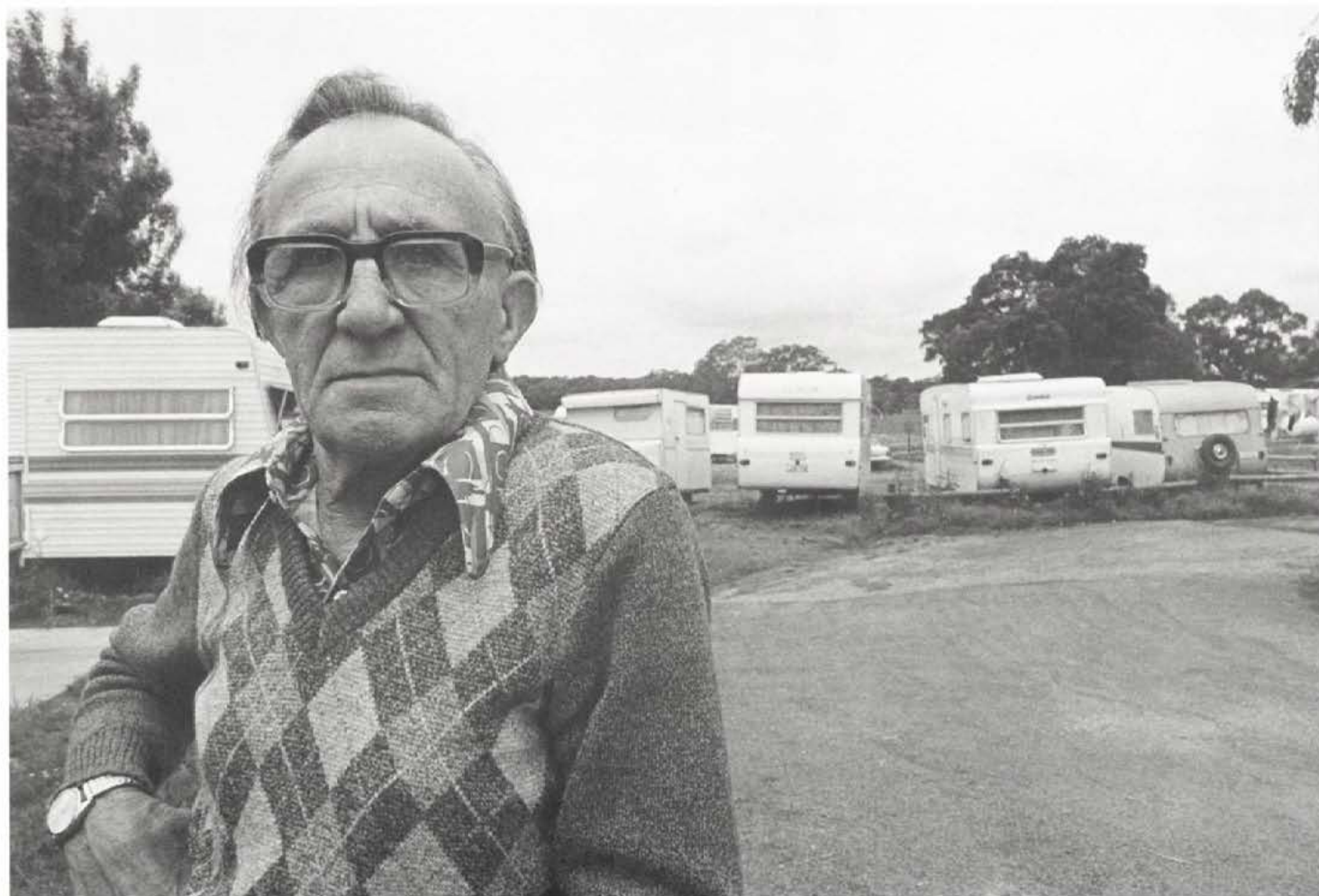
"The caraven I live in is very cramped. As a T.P.I. pensioner I need warmer winter accomodation than I have now."

"Having rhemetoid arthritis and plastic joints, I would like to feel secure in my housing. I am living in a bungalow behind an old couple's house and don't know how long I will be able to stay here."

"(I need Housing Ministry accomodation) mainly because I am living in poverty. (I am) crippled with arthritis....lived at Frankston for 3 years in a caravan."

"I cannot afford \$61 a week out of \$96 pension. I have spent \$10,000 on rent in 3½ years."

"My wish is to be able, please God, to rent a permanent flat on a pension rate."



Charles and Janet

"We think it's time the Politicians got their priorities correct - number one being low-cost housing. We were paying \$30 per week out of \$130 pension. In three years the rent went up continually. Our Pension went up \$14 in the same period. Being unable to pay the increased rent, we had to part with our home. The only possible way to live was to live in a caravan. We could not take our belongings with us having such little room in the caravan, and consequently had to sell our treasured possessions. We are very worried and unhappy. There is no peace and quiet. At our age of 72 and 75 years we feel we deserve to live in a peaceful atmosphere and appropriate accommodation. It is time the Ministry of Housing recognised the appalling conditions people like ourselves are forced to live in and accept."

Survey Responses

"....rents always going up....prospects of being turned out later on"....(I need a Housing Ministry unit)...."so one can live, have a few dollars left over and enjoy whats left of my life." (66 years old)

"Being dependent solely on the pension, I barely exist. I cannot spare extras, or put aside anything. When my rent is raised in June, I will sink."

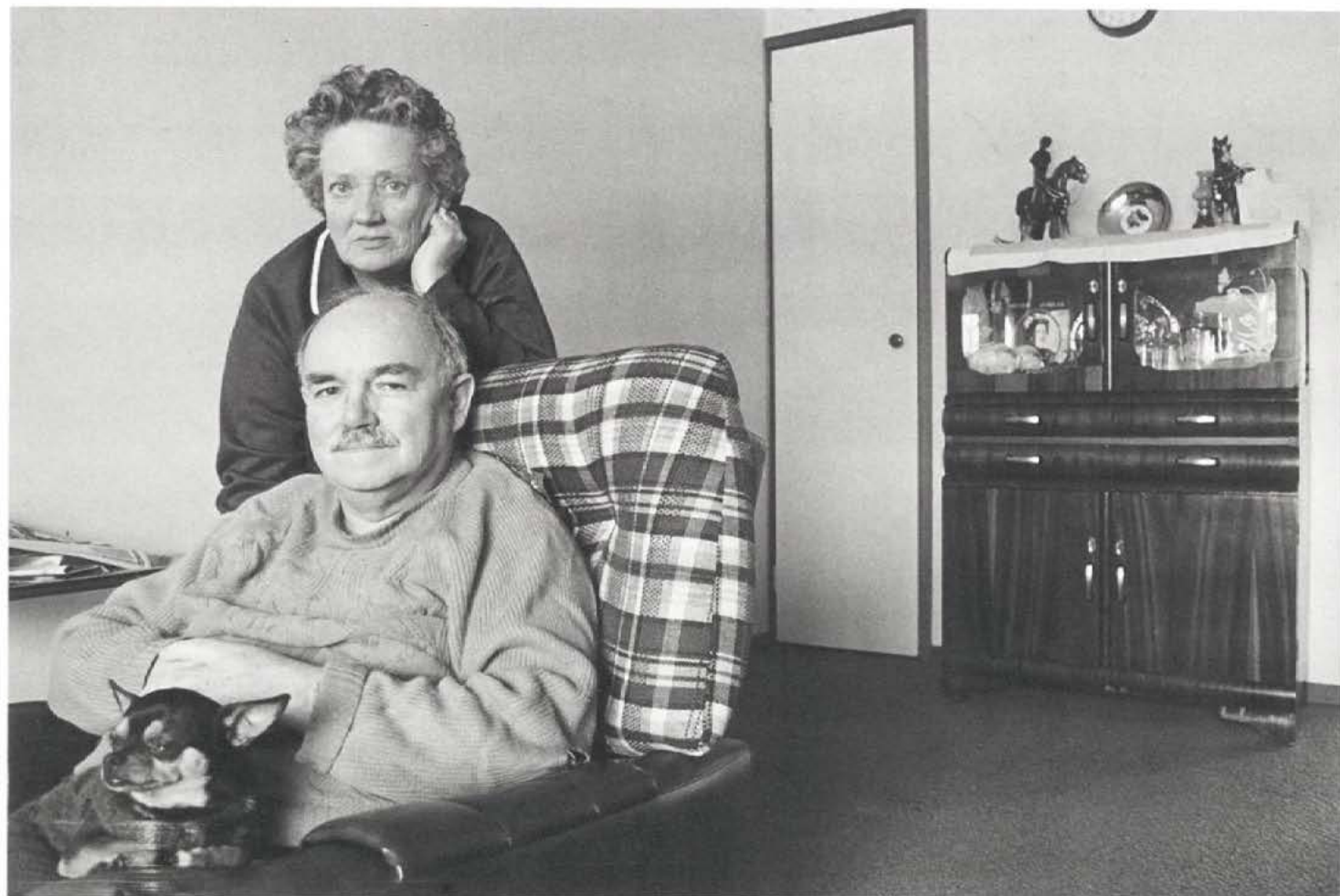
"After paying rent the money we have left barely covers expenses, such as electricity, phone, food etc."

"On retirement we will have very little to live on. The rent went up after 10 months tenure....and will no doubt rise again."

"Our main worry is paying high rent, also having to leave if the rent increases again. Both of us are not in good health."

"....the rent is too high for our income. we manage but we have to budget very carefully."

"My age need to settle at a permanent place with peace and quietness."



Darby and Joan of Seaford

"We are two aged persons in need of accommodation! At present we have a rented town house in Seaford. It is however well beyond our means, \$85 a week and going up to \$90 plus. Our problem is that because we have a (dare I say it) a pet, a little Chihuahua smaller than a cat, (regarded as a crime by most Estate Agents), we could only get this property. With electric and other expenses we find it very hard, we are both in poor health and need many tablets every day. We can't save any money and holidays are not on our agenda.

As we are unable to sleep in a double bed also we need two bedroom accommodation, as we are unable to sleep in a double bed through illness. There is not a lot we can specify but high rent such as this is a trauma in itself so many of the little luxuries that help along life's way are not possible."

Not Whingers Just Desperate
Darby and Joan

P.S. Since writing this we have been told that the rent will be \$100 per week from the 1st. of June, which means we will be forced to live in a caravan or tent.



Survey Responses

"Being on a pension does not always mean that one is unable to take pleasure in making a nice home and should be able to entertain family and friends in a reasonable environment. Also being on a pension does not always mean that a person is too old."

"To be independent and not have to worry about where we are going to stay as we get older. No way would I stay with the family, they have their own lives to lead."

"I feel trapped and insecure and need somewhere with heating and cheaper rent so I can go out (you can't buy clothes to go out)."

"I just wish to be stable, happy and be able to live decently not so poorly."

"I need a place of my own - I need some space - I need to feel secure and independent - I'm sick of moving."

Chris

"I moved into a private rented flat on the 18th May 1983, consisting of 1 bedroom, lounge, small kitchen off lounge, and toilet and shower off bedroom, the laundry being communal is at the back of the building, the rent is \$55 per week. The hot water boiler is of the old type with the result I have heavy electricity bills for instance for 5 weeks - \$75. I am a pensioner of 63 years of age, and I find that with rent and bills to pay, I am left with very little to survive on and as I have Emphesema and require to have an operation to remove a Cyst and Cartledge from my left leg it's difficult to manage.

I have applied for Aged Pensioners flat and my position on list is no.31, as they are building 31 in the near future I hope and trust I will be allocated, then I would be able to relax.

These flats I am in are solid concrete the only sunshine I can get is by having my door open as the verandah has been very badly built and

highly dangerous with no railings to prevent falling, I have to be careful when entering or leaving flat, as do any visitors.

I am a careful and caring tenant, as the maintenance manager has commented so often, I have asked for paint, walls and doors to be freshened up to no avail. I have heard that priority may be given to others before me when my turn comes for Commission Flat. I ask who deserves priority more than I do. All I look forward to is a decent home at a decent rental to enjoy my old age in without having to scrimp and scrape on very little, surely this cannot be too much to ask, after all we have worked all our lives with nothing to show at this age. Could it be that we pensioners are considered obsolete and ready for the scrap heap. I for one don't feel ready if this is so, I have a lot of living to do and I am extremely active so all I ask is please someone give me the answer I so desire and help us.



Fran and John

Our home we live in is privately owned. It is rather an old style home. We have to use a kerosene and electric heaters to keep warm in the cold weather which is quite costly to pensioners or small income folks. There is one entrance straight into the lounge and very airy. The bedroom is cold, also there are doors that do not fit so well therefore the wind really finds its way in. A piece of newspaper fills in the cracks. We have to store things there. We took this home and knew what was here but it was only \$30 but the rent rose to \$45 overnight. It's also causing nervous troubles. We are both pensioners. We cannot have our family for a stay. Our friends are unable to have a holiday with us. As we both suffer chest, Arthritis and heart troubles, too many to mention, we need warmth.

Survey Responses

"The problem is that I have no hot water in the kitchen, and have to get it from the bathroom to wash up. Also it is a briquette heater which costs me \$6.20 per week to keep going."

"Vacation of these premises (warrant for demolition) leaves us no where to live."

"....no future prospects for (finding) another house."

"The maintenance is getting beyond me at 78 years. Also my wife is a very bad diabetic and needs to be nearer than 5 miles to the doctor."

"The house is a weatherboard, badly in need of repair and the only heating is a briquette heater."

"If I complain about conditions the agent says they will only do it on vacant possession and not to make noises so we all keep quiet and if we don't the rent will go up."

"These flats are very cold. I pack as much paper around the sides and underneath the doors as I can get."

"....very old place, likely to be demolished, under Council ban."

"I was very desperate myself and prepared to take the first accommodation which came my way. But it's not comfortable, it's too cold and winter is yet to come. I'm dreading it, both for warmth and the cost of it."

Survey Responses

"We are worried in case the property is to be sold, as we have heard that this is the case. The surveyors have been around and also the agents came earlier in the year, which upsets us very much."

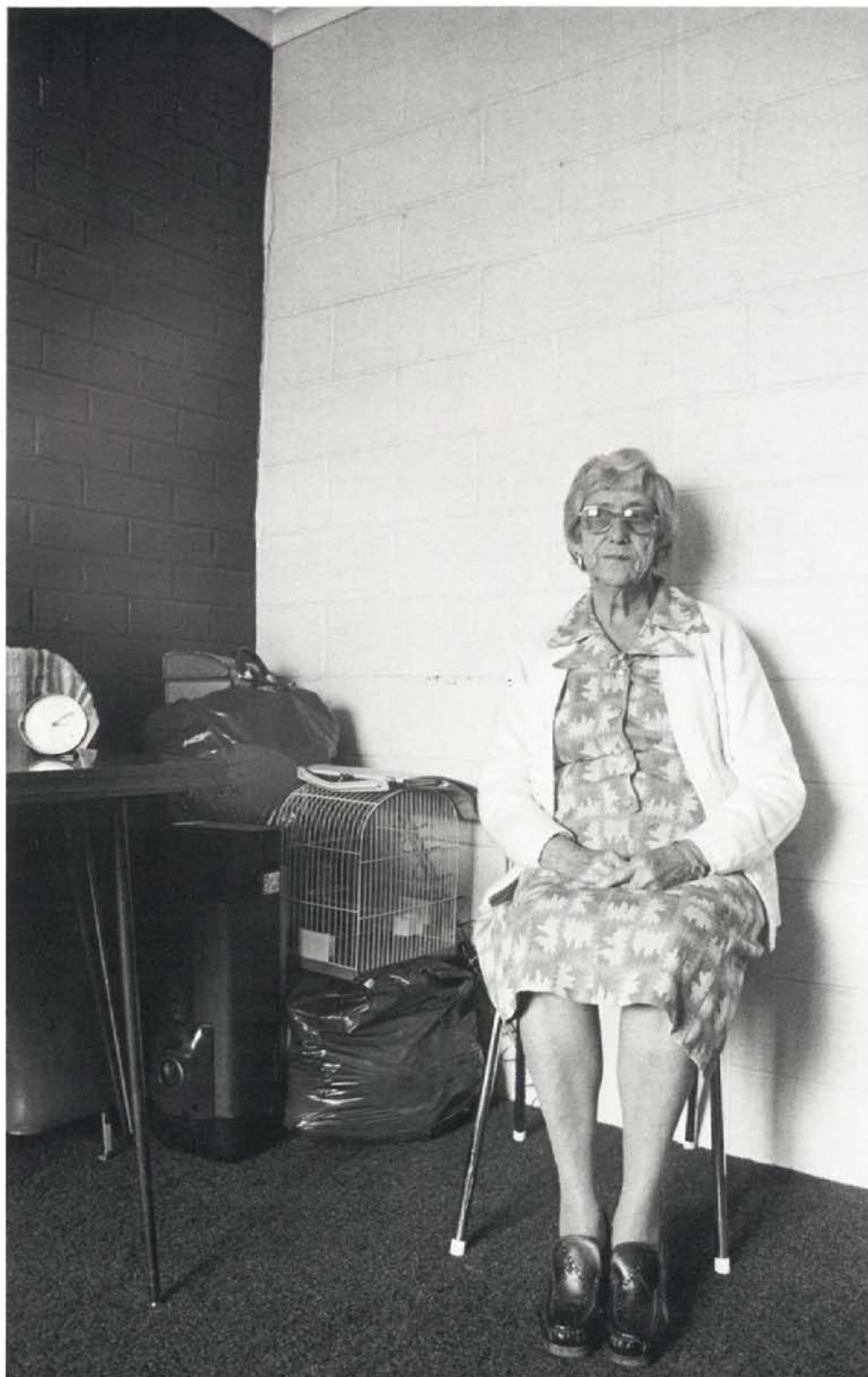
"We prefer a commission flat to make us feel secure as these days one never knows when flats are going to be sold, else they are going up every 12 months."



There is one thing that means a lot to us a small yard in which we have a small vegie patch. Flowers everywhere we can grow them which has cheered up outside quite a lot. We also have a lot of pot plants which keep us from going insane. Everything that has been done here we have done on our own. This is why we would like to have a two bed-roomed home with a small piece of ground to work, and keep us from going insane. The Government should not put elderly folk into units if they do not wish to go.

Not much good at putting words on paper these days.

(Signed) Fran-John.



Marge

I have been waiting for a Flat (Commission) for 2½ years but, I've been told I have to wait for another 12 months, unless somebody goes out of a 1 Bedroom Flat or when one becomes available. I am 79 years old and I am in a private flat but it is a big worry for me. I am paying \$114 per fortnight out of my pension.

Survey Responses

"They can give notice anytime."

"I don't know where to go if the flat is sold."

"I don't know how long I'll be able to stay here. I'm trusting God. I have 2 radiators that keep me warm. I would feel more secure in a Housing Commission unit."

"I have moved 8 times in 3 years."

"The owner is selling the premises and told me to look out for other premises as soon as possible."

"I have been a widow for 14 years and would like to have somewhere to live in peace and contentment for the years I have left. I would like to have somewhere to live permanently as I am tired of going from one place to another (not through my fault)."

"My age need to settle at a permanent place with peace and quietness."

"Day by day I go through the stress not knowing how long I am going to be here. It is like living with a time bomb. I can't sleep at night through worry, getting a Housing Commission place would give me the sense of security which I need and don't have."



Jessie

Seven years on the transfer liststill waiting.

Survey Responses

"Sixteen months ago my wife had a heart attack and also suffers from arthritis, so we wanted to transfer to be a bit nearer to the family in case anything went wrong....the lift (here) is forever breaking down and she has to wait until it's repaired as she cannot climb the stairs to the top floor. We have had doctor's letters and our M.P. has tried, all to no avail. We had a letter from the Council to say we had no chance as people living in that area come first....I can't afford to get a private unit as the rents are too high."

"I am on invalid pension. I know there are a lot worse off than me. I was offered a bedsitter upstairs from the commission but I cannot manage stairs so I have a long wait."

1979 -1983 ?

Betty and Bert

"We are amongst this group of elderlies who have been waiting for low rent public housing for 3 or more years.

Although fortunately we are not in as great a need as many on the Housing list we **are** concerned at the time delay. Some of our members have waited 6 years.

Do we have to have such long delays?"



Survey Responses

"Some pensioners like their own bedroom, especially if one is much older and has chronic bronchitis. Also no where for a member of the family to stay. In our case (we have) separate rooms."

"....(I) feel the need for a small garden and the love and company of a pet."

"Owing to my wife having diabetes and amount of times being disturbed during the night - must have separate bedrooms."

"I would like to assist my sister occasionally in having my mother of 88 years to stop for a week or two."

"...(a) bedsitter means giving up most of my furniture."

"I would like to have a 2 bedroom (place) so that my 4 children, 13 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren from time to time can visit me and could sleep at my place."

"Our main concern for housing, apart from high rental, is for a house to enable us to care for our 4 year old granddaughter and to be able to have her keep her pets we feel the Ministry of Housing in offering a one-bedroom flat is depriving us of the right to look after our own family members."

Summary

This is a summary of our research into the housing needs and preferences of the aged in our area. It was written by the researcher.

Over-all, while distinctions could be made between different sub-groups, the data shows there is a basic need, often a desperate need, for immediate low cost public housing for the majority of aged Ministry of Housing applicants.

The data shows that 78% of single respondents and 37% of couples who gave information about the net household income and rental costs, are living below the poverty line or marginally above it.

The data also shows that given that these respective respondents were able to rent M.O.H. Elderly Persons Units, the financial and emotional hardship they are currently experiencing would be minimized or even eliminated.

Likewise, of the respondents who answered the question as to whether there was any urgency in their need for M.O.H. accommodation, 70% stated there was. These respondents wrote clear accounts of their reasons. These accounts gave validity to the respondents real and urgent need for M.O.H. accommodation.

The evidence suggests quite strongly that for these respondents, a wait on M.O.H. accommodation will involve immeasurable hardship.

Of all respondents, 66% did not feel confident they could stay in their current accommodation as long as they liked. A further 10% stated doubts about being able to do so. The respondents who felt unable to stay in their present accommodation, indicated a strong desire for security/ permanency.

The data indicates a preference by couples for either a home or a 2 bedroom flat. The data indicates a preference by single applicants for a 1 bedroom flat. The single applicants for M.O.H. Elderly Persons Units may be indicating a genuine preference in wanting a 1 bedroom flat over a 2 bedroom flat or their preference may indicate a low expectation.

In conclusion, one respondent perhaps summed up succinctly the general feeling of respondents when he wrote:

"My wish is to be able, please God, to rent a permanent flat on a pension rate."

Survey Responses

"My sister is only renting this house, when her family come to stay here, I have to go up (to Melbourne) and stay with my daughter who has 5 children and a son-in-law in a 3 bedroom house."

"I live alone and would like to get near my brother-in-law and sister as I am very lonely and depressed."

"My husband is an invalid being a stroke victim and diabetic and needs special care from me. He walks in a frame and needs to be showered and dressed by me. So we need to be on our own. Having to share a house with a teenage granddaughter and grandson that cannot use the bathroom and toilet when they want to....my husband often has no control over his bowels and bladder....it is most embarrassing for all of us....it is dreadful being in a house with others in the house. It is as bad for them as for J, and myself."

"I have taken over my granddaughter's bedroom - she now sleeps in her mother's room. Things are cramped beyond description - my furniture is in storage - and - 3 generations in one home DOES NOT WORK."

"I am the outsider and feel very insecure as I don't know how long I can stay. Living with the family in the past has put pressure on their marriages. Present situation is only temporary and after 8 months we are all feeling the stress."

"(Living in a bungalow at the back of the house) it is very cold weatherboard bungalow and very draughty in the winter time....I would feel safer in a unit as it is very lonely and scary at night time, as the owners do not live here. I feel a need for company around me, as I have to take sleeping pills each night so I can sleep....as I get very nervous with no neighbours next to me and it frightens me...."

**Increase funds for housing for the aged NOW.
Tomorrow is too late!**