



OLDER PERSONS' HOUSING INFORMATION  
AND SUPPORT SERVICE



## Preventing Homelessness in Older Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities Project 2015

### *Housing stories from Ethno-Specific Community Reference Groups*

#### **Story 1:**

*Suad left Iraq with her family due to war in 1990. She is 65 years old and is a widow. She has four children, one girl and three boys. She was living with her oldest son in Northcote. Suad rented a house, and after a while her son and pregnant daughter in law moved in with her.*

*When her daughter in law had their first son, Suad felt that she should give her grandson her bedroom, so she began sleeping on the sofa. After a while, Suad felt bad for making the sofa a mess, so she slept on the floor. The daughter in law was cruel towards Suad and called her names.*

*Suad wasn't happy but she felt helpless. Her son kept her ATM card, and each fortnight took Suad's entire pension, leaving her with just \$20 per week. Suad wanted to get out of the house, so she joined an Arabic speaking Planned Activity Group, which met on Mondays. One Monday, when she returned home, Suad found her things on the floor in front of the house, and when she tried to get inside her daughter in law stopped her from entering the house. As she tried again to open the door, her daughter in law pushed her into the wall. Neighbours called the police and an intervention order took place. Suad had bad memoirs in this house and wanted to find somewhere else to live.*

#### **Story 2:**

*A couple well settled, wanted their parents to join them in Melbourne Australia. The Parents knew that their son was in debt and before departing their birth place, they decided to sell their property to help their only son to reduce his debt burden.*

*The son and the family were very happy to see the parents. The grandchildren were especially delighted. After settling down for few days without any hesitation, the father happily gives their money to their son and said "To help you reduce your debt I have sold the property in India. I have never been in debt and how can I see my son in debt".*

*The son was so thankful he sincerely touched his dad's feet and hugged him with tears in his eyes. The whole family had a very enjoyable and relaxed few months*



together- but then the atmosphere changed and cracks started to appear in the family. Both son and daughter in-law started to argue amongst themselves behind closed doors and then in front of their parents. As the parents tried to interfere, they were told to keep out as it is not their business, yet they were the elders and felt it was their right to interfere to smooth things out.

The wife was not happy working all day and coming home to prepare food for the family and told her husband that he should ask his mother to make food in the evening. The son was reluctant to ask. One day mother over heard their argument and offered cook to help to keep peace in the family.

The daughter in law did not like the food that mother cooked and complained a lot. Due to their age, the parents were getting very tired doing house chores but did not complain to anyone. The parents could not go out as they didn't have a car and didn't know how to get around. They had no contact with the outside world. Both mum and dad started to get depressed. During a heart to heart conversation they said "we came here to spend quality time with our children but never thought that we would suffer this way, we can't go back to India, we have no friends, what should we do?". Many thoughts were going through their minds. "We are their parents and not the servants, why are our children are treating us this way".

### **Story 3:**

Esma and her husband have been living in Australia for the past 20 years.

When Esma was in her 80's she and her husband moved in with her son and his family. Despite loving her grandchildren, Esma needed her peace and couldn't stand them playing and running around the house all the time.

She and her husband decided to move out and looked for an appropriate property. A lady who was from the same country as them agreed to rent them a property for three months but under her conditions; without a real estate agency being involved and accepting payment in cash only. She refused to do any modifications to the apartment to accommodate for Esma's husband, who needed hand rails to and ramps after having a stroke. They were told if they wish to go through regular channels the rent will significantly go up. Esma and her husband felt trapped and blackmailed.

Esma does not know what to do about this as her son doesn't show interest in helping them. They do not have a lot of money and won't be able to afford rent increase or pay higher rent somewhere else.

### **Story 4**

Mr and Mrs Lee came to Australia to look after their grandchildren. They came to Australia 10 years ago. They live with their son, daughter in law and 2 grand

*children in a three bedroom house. The grandchildren, a boy and a girl, 9 and 11 years old, share a room. The parents and grandparents sleep in the other 2 rooms.*

*Recently the son and daughter in law have been arguing. The daughter in law's parents want to come and live with them in Australia. The daughter in law wants Mr and Mrs Lee to move out, as she believes there will no longer be space for them in the house.*

*Mr and Mrs Lee did not want to see the children fight. They wanted to find somewhere else to live, to make way for the daughter in-law's parents. Mr and Mrs Lee can't buy a house, as they sold their house to come to Australia and don't have enough money. They are happy to live alone, for the sake of their children's happiness, but they don't know where to go to get help.*