

Media Release

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Archbishop supports affordable housing calls

Without access to affordable housing, Alan and Barb would probably be living in a caravan.

Twelve years ago they were renting a unit in Watsonia when the owners decided to sell. “At the time, only one of us was working on a casual basis so other rentals were not affordable as most of our savings were diminished,” said Alan. “The only other possibility was to move to a caravan at Cobram, which we co-owned at the time, but this meant being isolated away from any family and we also both had significant health issues.”

Thankfully, the pair qualified for a [VMCH](#) affordable home in Ivanhoe East, where they have lived ever since. Non-profit Catholic aged and disability organisation VMCH provides affordable homes for around 400 people aged over 55 who are at risk of homelessness.

October 10 is World Homeless Day – highlighting the needs of people struggling with housing across the globe. VMCH is a supporter of the [Everybody's Home Campaign](#) – which aims to see 500,000 new, low-cost rental homes built by 2026 to meet incredible demand.

Homelessness is a growing problem for older Australians, and will likely continue to increase over time due to an ageing population and declining rates of home ownership among older people. Over the last ten years, the number of older homeless people increased by 49 per cent (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

Recent Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot figures revealed just 0.8 per cent of available housing stock in Australia is affordable and appropriate for a single person on an Age Pension.

Melbourne Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli said the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the important need for housing support.

“This year we have all been confined to our homes. What does that mean if you don’t have one, or are worried about what the future holds for you? Sometimes we need to action more than just a shelter, and provide places for people that offer real hope to grow. Opportunities, such as those offered through VMCH, offer a pathway to stability and a chance to plant seeds for the future.”

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart agreed our nation’s older generation deserved access to safe and secure housing.

“These individuals have worked their whole lives to provide for their families and contribute positively to our society, so it’s heartbreaking to see so many unable to secure such a simple human right as appropriate housing. We have committed our own funds to building an extra 40 homes for older Victorians in Ivanhoe beginning next year, and will continue to provide support where we can in this important area.”

Alan describes affording housing as “critical” for older people.

“Particularly for those who are homeless, or perhaps coping with the aged pension as their only source of income,” he said.

“The upkeep (at Ivanhoe East) is minimal, we have inside cleaning done each fortnight at low cost, and gardening is handled by our family as we now find this difficult physically. We are very happy here.”

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic not for profit organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.