

Crisis: Nowhere to go

By BARBARA LYNCH

CRISIS accommodation does not get more real for one bayside teenager who has spent the last year moving from one temporary house to another in a bid to find a permanent home.

Instead of preparing for the birth of her daughter, now three months old, 19-year-old Sarah (not her real name) spent the time wondering if she would have a roof over her head for her young family.

"If you told me that when I was 19 I wouldn't have a permanent place to live I wouldn't have believed you," she said.

Sarah's 24-year-old partner is frequently denied rental accommodation and she is listed for a Housing Commission house.

Finding private rental properties is hard and Sarah has applied for 10 houses in the last three months.

She was knocked back for all of them and told she did not make enough money.

Sarah is happy living in the bayside but admitted she would leave in order to have a permanent home.

She is also trying to find accommodation for her 17-year-old brother.

They are often separated because there is not enough room to house all of them.

"This puts a lot of strain on my relationship with my partner and we start a lot of arguments with each other," Sarah said.

During the last few months of her pregnancy, Sarah frequently broke down crying because she was worried she had nowhere for her baby to go.

"My baby is the only thing that keeps me positive through this," she said.

"I'm doing this for her.

"It's really hard with a newborn baby because I can't have a crib or her own wardrobe."

Sarah said she had to make do with hand-me-down clothing from friends.

Going home was not an option for her.

"With the situation it is, I can't go back home and they don't have any room for us either."

Sarah has to survive on family assistance payments of \$460 a fortnight.

"For a two-bedroom place I'm looking at \$200 or \$210 a week," Sarah said.



Life is tough when you have nowhere to go.

Picture: Adam Armstrong



Ron Goodman
Editor

Response not enough

OPINION

ONE thing stands in the way of a solution to the bayside emergency accommodation crisis – the political will to fix it.

Reading the responses of the State and Federal Governments, you would think that this was clearly somebody's responsibility and that it was not being met.

Do not be fooled.

This is not a case of one government not doing its job. This is a case of two governments unwilling to put their hands up and say "we will give this a go".

The State and Federal Governments each have the money in the bank to address the shortage of local crisis accommodation.

Both governments have given the now predictable response to any highlighted crisis – "Oh, we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the general spending area you refer to".

Well, it is time that governments were told that waving the total of dollars already spent is not an answer in itself.

The Bayside Housing Group's 2001 report *Exposing the Gap* was proof of a desperate need.

The figures released by BABI Youth and Family Support last week, showing it had turned away more than 500 people needing crisis accommodation in the 12 months to June 2005, are damning.

In four and a half years the problem has grown, and still Federal and State Governments are merely waxing lyrical about all the money they have spent without fixing it.

To protect the most vulnerable in our community, this must change.

Starting today, these governments should be judged by their action, or lack of action, on this issue.

For the Right Advice
FAMILY LAW
Connor Hunter
LAW FIRM
55 Tingal Rd, Wynnum
3893 3388
Clair Perkins

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QUEST COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS Pub: WRH 15-MAR-2006 Page: 3 Colour: C M Y K