

Dear Justine,

Thank you for the opportunity to put some of my observations into the homelessness situation of a Morwell citizen. The problem arose mid-December 2019 when a homeless man appeared on the streets on the southern side of Morwell.

He unkempt and unwashed and was in the habit of walking up and down the street talking to himself. This behaviour further deteriorated into suddenly yelling out at passers by, frightening and scaring them away from the shopping activities. He has also been sent to be publicly urinating and using injection syringes on the street. As time progressed and the homeless man's condition further deteriorated, anecdotal feedback from customers was that they were shopping elsewhere because of the issue.

I am a retired pharmacist and landlord who has worked in Morwell for over 40 years and I have never seen anything like this before.

I have spoken to the local traders I know and they have all said they have contacted the local police, local city council and local politicians to minimal effect.

From my enquires I have learnt that the homeless man does in fact have somewhere to live but chooses to live on the streets. I have learnt that the police and city council have limited powers to deal with the issue because of human rights issues. The local hospital has limited ability to find a solution to his psychiatric issues, as patients admitted to their emergency psychiatric ward can discharge themselves when the patient decides.

I have undertaken enquires with local politicians and it was through our State Member Russell Northe that I received details of your Homelessness in Victoria enquiry. It was also through Russell I was last week given contact details at the Morwell Police for their Morwell Pro-active Policing Unit and have received assurances that they are aware of the situation and something will be happening to this homeless man in the next few weeks.

The questions that should be investigated by the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victorian are why has it taken over 6 months to get to this stage, why is there no protocol for dealing with homeless people who obviously have a psychiatric condition and cannot make rational decisions, and why there are no dedicated psychiatric facilities for people in this situation to be housed, treated and rehabilitated into the community.

Homelessness can happen to anyone as is the case of this man who apparently was an accountant. The situation that this man finds himself in appears to be psychiatric and drug related in his case and there are not enough facilities in our region to deal with his issues.

Thank you for permitting me to make this late submission to your Inquiry and I am looking forward to hearing the outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

John Bellerby B. Pharm. (retired)