



Ending homelessness
in Brisbane one person,
one family at a time

500 Lives 500 Homes - a coalition of government and non-government agencies supported by the Queensland Government's **Home for Good** initiative and Brisbane City Council

MARGARET*

When the 500 Lives 500 Homes registry team found Margaret, she was sitting in a doorway outside a 7-11 store in the CBD of Brisbane, sheltering from the rain. Margaret had been living rough for “way too many years”, she said, including living in a park just across from King George Square.

Margaret became homeless when she was made redundant in a job. She soon picked up more work, she says, but she lost her private rental accommodation in the meantime.

With no family or support network to help her, Margaret found herself living in hostels and on the street, doing it tough for twenty years.

Affordability, she says, was her biggest obstacle to finding rental accommodation. Because of her circumstances, she couldn't find permanent employment and was dependent on Newstart.

“When you're living on the street,” she asks, “how do you go to interviews, hold down a job, or meet all your Newstart obligations?”

Margaret has also been on the housing waiting list for more than ten years and found the worst aspect of homelessness was the social isolation. “Okay,” she says, “you think ‘I'll tough it out’, but it's really

embarrassing, humiliating and shameful. And when you don't know the ropes, life on the streets can be really difficult.”

As a result of being interviewed by the 500 Lives 500 Homes Registry Team, however, the Street to Home Team and the Queensland Department of Housing pulled out all stops to house Margaret and she moved into secure accommodation with Brisbane Common Ground in South Brisbane in April.

Since moving in, says Margaret, her life has been turned around. “It's made an unbelievable difference,” she says. “It's like there's no fear or danger, and the mental stability is brilliant. Knowing you can walk away from other people's problems - the privacy, security.

“The facilities here are unreal,” she says. “Micah are helping me look for employment, and I've been taking cooking lessons and learning computer skills in the computer room.”

Margaret will enjoy continuing support for some time, including regular access to a GP for her physical wellbeing.

*Not her real name.