
FROM A TENT IN A REFUGEE CAMP TO A TENT IN TASMANIA?

The current housing crisis is affecting many Australians. Some of our most vulnerable are people who are newly arrived to our country.

People moving from war torn countries to Tasmania, under Australia's Humanitarian Program, have much to offer and much to learn. Former refugees face great challenges in dealing with settlement in Australia. All have experienced a level of trauma associated with displacement and their war experiences. Many also suffer from the effects of torture, trauma and unstable living conditions for prolonged periods. Arrival in Australia should herald a time of peace and stability and the opportunity to hope for a healthy future. But many of our new arrivals are struggling to find and maintain appropriate, affordable housing.

According to Mike Drell who is a Community Worker with Colony 47's Newly Arrived Youth Support Service (NAYSS), people are sometimes confronted with up to 50 other possible tenants at one open home, all competing for the same property.

Mike tells the story of John, a 19 year old who came to Australia with his aunt, sister and brother. John was born in Burundi, but fled the genocide there, walking from country to country, mostly on his own as a teenager. He eventually arrived at a refugee camp in Malawi where he survived for many years before resettlement in Australia.

Unfortunately, John experienced much family conflict when they originally settled in Tasmania and desperately needed to find his own accommodation. Depression, limited English and schooling made this impossible. John's Youth Allowance means he can only afford accommodation up to \$110 per week. He has no furniture, no reference (often the last residence of a humanitarian entrant was a refugee camp) and needs to be close to public transport, as he does not hold a driver licence.

Inadequate supply of housing, increased demand, decreased affordability and social hierarchy in competing for housing places, are all issues facing humanitarian entrants who have come to Australia under the Federal Government's Humanitarian Program.

Colony 47 runs two programs for new arrivals; NAYSS and SGP (Settlement Grants Program). These programs work with humanitarian entrants to provide support that builds capacity, helping individuals become self reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival. NAYSS concentrates on the support of young people to create a successful future in Australia, while understanding and remembering the significance of family culture, values and identity.

These programs, along with all other agencies, are struggling to fulfill the needs of our new arrivals, particularly due to the lack of affordable and appropriate housing for the size and number of families who we have invited to call Tasmania their new home; people who have suffered greatly in their lives and who have come to Australia in the hope of finding a better future. Colony 47 is anxious that we may see our first humanitarian families coming from a tent in a refugee camp to a tent in the Tasmanian winter. Who wants to ensure this doesn't happen?

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Therese Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Mobile: 0419 302 777

For more information about Colony 47 check our website www.colony47.com.au.