



# Inquiry into homelessness in Victoria

## Submission by MICH

### 1 Introduction

This case study is of a member of the grassroots, self-help organisation, Manningham Inclusive Community Housing (MICH) whose mission is to help young adults with an intellectual disability to stay in their community through access to affordable long-term accommodation within community, thus creating a sustainable home. It is a holistic approach where we assist them to create a life that is embedded in their community through valued roles and the building of relationships.

*Adam* (fictitious name) is a 28-year old man, who has a mild intellectual disability, lived with his mother in a rented home. He attended a special school where he was a very good student who was popular with other students and staff alike. He was articulate and well-behaved.

When he left school, he obtained his car licence and was employed at Coles Supermarket for a few hours a week. This ended when he asked for more hours, but he decided he would like to pursue different avenues for work.

Through the lack of work opportunities and his mother's life-threatening illness Adam became quite depressed. His mother became very concerned about his state of mind and resulting anxiety— considering her illness she registered him as a member of MICH to ensure security for him into the future. YMCA provided a mentor but that ended when he turned 25.



## 2 Challenges

Whilst *Adam* is quite articulate and has the ability to live independently with minimum supports, he has lost the will to care for himself or his surroundings adequately. This was exacerbated by the loss of his mother due to cancer 3 years ago, and he has been living alone since then with only the help of his next-door neighbour. His constant companion was a cat that lived inside, and although loved and fed, was allowed to soil throughout the home.

A MICH representative contacted Adam several times after his mother died but he was reluctant to talk or want to be involved in anything. To our knowledge he has no other relatives apart from a much younger brother, who is in care; he does not have a good relationship with him.

Adam has become a recluse spending most of his time playing computer games, resulting in the problem of obesity. Due to poor eating habits, he has become obese and has a serious threat of diabetes. His personal hygiene has also been neglected. He has no friendship group, plays no sport and has no active participation in the community. Through our observation of *Adam* over time we believe he is currently suffering from depression.

Eventually, Adam was requested to leave the rental accommodation and was therefore rendered homeless.

## 3 Solution

*Adam* is now allowing MICH representatives to assist him, and this has resulted in the following:

MICH found supported residential accommodation for *Adam* that he agreed to go to for a few months; however, his choice is to be in his own home. Volunteers of MICH assisted him to move out of the derelict home to this accommodation—this was a huge task as the home needed to be returned to its original state prior to the rental.

MICH has created an active support network from its committee members, called a 'Circle of Support' (COS) to assist *Adam*. It is a group of people who have come together in friendship, for the purpose of helping him regain control of his life. The aim is to give him the support he needs to make choices and accept the responsibility of those choices. His COS will enable more people to come into his life who are not paid to be there, though we anticipate he will



have some formal, paid people as outlined in his National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding. It is our hope that as he receives the targeted and appropriate support to help him towards wellness, he will start to enjoy expanded social and economic opportunities. The COS will also assist *Adam* to work towards his choice to live by himself, an appropriate house in his chosen suburb, when he is ready for the responsibility. The COS will be an important safeguard for his future and a better life.

## 4 Benefit

Many MICH members and the wider disability community have experienced the benefits of building community networks for vulnerable individuals. We anticipate the 'Circle of Support' approach will assist *Adam* to have a life that is lived in community by helping him to develop new friendships and relationships through new work and leisure roles. We believe it will influence his overall wellbeing through choice and control. The Circle of Support will be an important safeguard for his future.

There are positive benefits not only for *Adam* but also for other people with a disability and their families, and the wider community, as they observe what can happen when people walk alongside the most vulnerable in our society.

## 5 Contact

**Anita O'Brien**

Member of the Committee of Management

anita@tristateac.com.au

mobile 0416 064 045

For further information visit [www.MICH.org.au](http://www.MICH.org.au)