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Rural Housing Network Saved My Life

August 2016

That's how Ken Arthur, now living in Wangaratta, summed up his experience of finding himself without a housing option aged 62.

"It probably started a couple of years before my wife died of cancer in 2010 – I stopped work to nurse her myself and after she died I was lost. Then I found it harder and harder to even get part-time work – basically once you are over 50 without a job, no-one wants to give you a go even though I had worked all my life."

"I'd been renting my previous house for three years and was behind in my rent and electricity bills so when the landlord told me he was selling it; I couldn't see a future. You need money to move house – for a deposit and moving costs."

"I'm sure something like this happens to people everyday...they are going along fine and someone goes to hospital and they get a bad outcome and their life is turned upside down.

"I was really low because I had nowhere to go and saw no options. I was ready to leave my possessions to the Salvos and walk out the door until I met Sandy at Rural Housing. When you look at the end of the road and you see no solution, you have no hope. Now that I have my unit, my outlook has

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completely changed. I can look for work, because I want to get back to working, to contribute to society, and at the end of the day know I have somewhere to come home to."

Ken was paying nearly 60% of his Newstart allowance on rent in his previous accommodation which constitutes severe housing stress; one of the main precursors for people not being able to maintain bill and rent payments.

"I went to Rural Housing with about a month left to go before I had to move out. They explained the options and that I might get some temporary accommodation and I was worried about my possessions but they put me at ease that these could be stored in the short term.

"Next I heard the manager of a unit I could rent was coming to interview me and I moved in last Saturday.

"My priority now is to get a job. In the last few years I couldn't even get an opportunity to do fruit picking. I worked for 19 years in hospitals as a personal service attendant and I'd be happy to do any sort of work.

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