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Brad's message during Homelessness Week

August 2018

Whenever it rains, Brad feels a sense of relief. Because now he is warm and comfortable inside his own home and he, along with everything he owns, won't be soaked through. The sound of rain is welcome.

He's still adjusting to having a comfortable, permanent and safe place to sleep every night. A home of his own.

"It's wonderful being able to have a shower whenever you want," he says. "People take toilets for granted," he laughs.

Having lived rough for a long period of time, it's still a novelty for Brad to see his name on mail in the letter box at his own home address.

Brad, who was living in a bush camp in the Wodonga area, says homelessness can happen to anyone and many working people are just as at risk of homelessness as those on income support.

"I've been homeless twice and I've had full time jobs, working in construction," he says.

Brad has got his life back on track with the assistance of Junction Support Services and BeyondHousing. For Brad, it wasn't just about finding stable

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Brad

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housing, it was the support he had from both organisations working together to help him overcome the barriers to staying housed for the long-term.

"I think the biggest thing is the stigma that gets put on a person experiencing homelessness. They must have done something wrong; they must be a grub they must be an alcoholic, it's their own fault or this and that. And a lot of people haven't done anything wrong, they're just in a spot right now where they're out there because they have nowhere else to go," he says.

"When you're doing it tough, the best thing you can do is keep warm and keep safe, but the biggest thing you can do is keep your head up and reach out for help. There are services like BeyondHousing and Junction Support Services that will work really hard with you to find you somewhere to live. Just because you have got to do it doesn't mean you have got to do it hard and on your own."

Asked what his message to the wider community is about homelessness, Brad replies: "I wish people would realise we're just people too."

"Living on the street... I can sit there and see every single person walks past me throughout the day but there will be three out of every 100 people who will really see me because no-one takes the time to look.

"Their eyes are in their phone or looking somewhere else, never looking at you. I'd like for people to realise that you're still a person that you just haven't got a home."

Brad's message is an important one, homelessness is an experience and not an identity. For people experiencing homelessness, Brad's story is an important reminder that homelessness is not the stopping point, that there are services in your area able to help you and link in with other services for all the support you need.

Brad was supported through the 'A Place to Call Home' program. This program supports vulnerable households to move seamlessly from Transitional to public housing.