



## Home for me is sanctuary

Home for me is sanctuary - a place where I feel safe and secure. It is also a place where I can be myself, relax and unwind. It is a space that I can have control over and have the things that provide me comfort. It is a space that I can call my own, have my family, friends and acquaintances visit whether that be for a cuppa, a meal, a party or some entertainment. It is often the place that people get to know me the best as they can observe and witness for themselves the things that matter to me. My home tells a story about me and is much more than bricks and mortar. I have a sign out the front of my home that reads "A house is made of walls and beams; a home is built with love and dreams". People often comment on how I have created a lovely space that is warm and welcoming and a place they would like to revisit.

A home provides stability. When I reflect on some years of my life, I was having to relocate on a regular basis (at times on an annual basis) for a variety of reasons - rent became too expensive, the landlord wished to sell, and the list goes on. There was no real opportunity of putting my roots down in my local community. It also cost money to relocate and set up home again. If something went wrong with the plumbing or something in the home required attention, I was always at the whim of the real estate agent or the owner as to when things were fixed.

My home also offers me stability in terms of having equity and choice on how I want to live out my retirement years. Home ownership is something that is still valued in Australia and rightly or wrongly provides a certain status to the home owner. We need to expect this for people with disability.

My home has become a launchpad into my local community where I have become connected and known by neighbours. I am a regular visitor to local cafes, newsagent, chemist, post office, gifts shops etc. I am known by my name and I am not just another person being served. From time to time one of the shop owners may even ask my opinion around something they could be considering changing. They value my input and therefore I have become a valued customer.

Home as a sanctuary for many people with disability does not exist. For many years I have been a visitor to group homes where people with disability live. Their home environment does not tell a story about the individuals who live there but rather a story about the service provider who has taken control of the space and made it into a workspace for workers rather than a sanctuary for the people who live there. They have no control over the space despite often being the ones paying the rent.

Many people with disability are not awarded the same right or opportunity to having a place that they can call home.

**Josey McMahon**

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