

STATEMENT BY CLAIRE, STRUGGLING WITH POSSIBLE HOMELESSNESS

My name is Claire and I am a 39 year old woman. I have a 7 year old son, full time and I am writing this to express how daunting the rental crisis is to me, personally.

I grew up in the Byron Shire. Brunswick Heads when I was in Primary School and then we moved to Mullumbimby, late Primary and all of High school. My first job was at the Empire Cafe, when it had the games room out the back. I walked or rode my bike to school from Pine Avenue every day. I swam in the Mullumbimby swim team and played netball every weekend at the netball courts. I grew up swimming in these oceans and rivers and exploring the rainforests, and although I've lived other places (I studied in South Australia and worked for AusAid development overseas for many years) my heart and my community is the Northern Rivers.

I returned home to settle in 2015, but fast forward to now, 2023, and I am not settled, I live in fear. Currently I live with my son in a cheap, 2 bedroom unit, which is up for development sale. It has been since we moved here, four years ago. I knew this, but it was all I could afford. Sadly, I have the predicament of both feeling so blessed I have a roof over my head for now but every day (well it's at night it keeps me awake) I live

with the anxiety and fear of what is to come for me and my little one.

Where will we go? How will we survive? To make ends meet, I am now a cleaner. A job I can do in school hours. I am a good tenant, I have never, ever, missed a rent payment or any of bills, and I have a little bit of savings... but I know that's not enough. Even if I earned a two parent income and applied for a rare and sacred rental, it's not enough. So what can I do? What will become of me and my son? There is so many struggling more than me, my heart breaks for them, but even though I have a home for now, I have to have a plan... a realistic plan to take care of my child. I know what the reality is and what comes next is so scary, I live in fear and on constant edge. I will continue to have faith something will change (it has to right?) but at the same time, my plan is to save enough money to buy a van for us to live in.

Why don't we move somewhere cheaper? Well, the Northern Rivers is our home! My work and our friends, family and community are all here... the people that make us smile and our support network that gets us through. Our hearts are here.

Thank you for reading.

Claire [REDACTED]

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