



Woolloomooloo Initiative

Final Report

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ABOUT MILK CRATE THEATRE, OUR PARTNERS AND THE STUDY

Milk Crate Theatre is first and foremost a community. We consist of creative individuals who come together to make entertaining, challenging and inspiring performances, whilst exploring issues, opinions and life experiences in the process. We are a direct partnership between actors, artists and community participants, walking a line between professional theatre and community development.

We work primarily in collaboration with the homeless and disadvantaged community located in the inner city, metropolitan and western suburbs of Sydney. We access this community through partnerships with a network of welfare services including Mission Australia, Wesley Mission, the Salvation Army, Hope Street, the Mercy Arms, Matthew Talbot Hostel, Rough Edges and the Wayside Chapel.

We aim to:

- Nurture creativity - as a way to connect, question and inspire.
- Teach life skills in expression, teamwork and communication.
- Facilitate education exchange and peer to peer learning.
- Express voices in the community that aren't heard.
- Improve understanding of the complex issues involved with homelessness and marginalisation.

We operate on three levels:

- Individual level – building self esteem, self-belief and capacity to make changes in life.
- Intra-community level – increasing sense of community, increasing group and social skills, increasing opportunities for communities to actively engage and have a voice on issues that directly relate to them, and reducing social isolation amongst those that are homeless and disadvantaged.
- Society level – taking an active role in promoting social inclusion via large-scale, high quality artistic productions that educate the wider community on mental illness and social marginalisation.

This is the first time Milk Crate Theatre has undertaken to conduct a scoping study of this scale. In this regard, we believe it marks our intention to provide sector leadership in the area of the arts and community development. We hope that the study leads to the development of new partnerships between Milk Crate Theatre, and local community and government services.

City of Sydney Council identified the need for community cultural development in Woolloomooloo following needs analyses and extensive community consultation to inform the Woolloomooloo Improvements Plan.

Community cultural development was identified as a creative and constructive way, to bring together different groups within the Woolloomooloo community, to develop response to priority areas of need - homelessness and safety.

People sleeping rough in Woolloomooloo are the most marginalised group and a cultural development project to respond to the needs of people sleeping rough, to acknowledge them as

part of the community and provide an opportunity to breakdown barriers and concerns of other groups, including children.

The City outlined a community cultural development project with three elements:

- (1) Direct consultation and relationship building with people who are homeless, particularly those people who are sleeping rough;
- (2) A Milk Crate Theatre show in Woolloomooloo to involve as many in the community as possible; and
- (3) Defining a proposal for further community cultural development in Woolloomooloo.

Arts Access Australia is the national peak body for arts and disability providing advocacy and leadership where the arts intersect with disability, mental health, ageing, education and employment. Arts Access Australia's involvement in the Woolloomooloo Initiative scoping study comes from an Australia Council funded arts and health project we were working on which included Indigenous homeless people. While that project stalled due to its complexity Arts Access Australia has identified homelessness as an ongoing area of interest given the strong correlation with mental health.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT BRIEF

Milk Crate Theatre was commissioned by City of Sydney Council with additional funding from Arts Access Australia to undertake a small-scale scoping study with the homeless community (in particular the rough sleepers) of Woolloomooloo to assess the possibility of setting up a sustainable theatre and/or arts program with them and in partnership with the services they access. A total of 120 hours was committed to the project (approximately 4 hours a week from November 2008 to March 2009, this increased towards the end of the project).

THE PROCESS

Stage One involves connecting and engaging with various aspects of the community. Stage Two covers the creation and staging of *A Woolloomooloo Story*, a forum theatre show based on a rough sleeper's real story to stimulate discussion about community issues. Stage Three charts audience feedback and responses.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Limitations:

- In the 4 hours a week that was allocated to the project only a limited rapport was able to be established with limited consistency.
- As the writer undertaking the study was a young woman, being on her own was a limitation in itself, as her own safety became an issue during the collection process.

Safety:

- Stand over figures were mentioned by a number of factions within the community.
- Working with Stand over figures in the community to understand the reasons behind their actions, getting them to the discussion table about their sense of belonging in the community, would be useful, albeit difficult and controversial.
- At present involving the support of police in running any outdoor community programs is necessary.

Belonging & Social Dynamics:

- People identify strongly with a sense of community in Woolloomooloo.
- A feeling of belonging is often hampered by a breakdown in communication between different parts of the community.
- Strong, inter-factional tensions exist and unless more time is dedicated to addressing this social dynamic it appears that current disturbances will keep recycling.
- Any community program undertaken in the future that wishes to work with this social dynamic in the neighbourhood, needs to engage with all the factions, particularly in terms of both future cultural programs and the City of Sydney Woolloomooloo Improvements Plan.

Cultural Programs & Partnerships:

- Some rough sleepers respond well to arts based programs that are continuous and drop in, such as existing visual arts programs in Woolloomooloo.

- For the majority of rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, given their transient lifestyles, a workshop program that requires ongoing commitment (such as a drama workshop program) would probably not be effective.
- More effective would be engaging them in one off events that they can be a part of without having to commit to a long term process.
- There is value in raising awareness of all existing arts programs in Woolloomooloo to promote cross-service/venue partnerships, so as to avoid the siloing of services and community members.
- The different factions in the community are currently reflected in these silos with people rarely attending programs outside their particular group/vicinity.

RECOMMENDATIONS & FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

- A sustainable, multifaceted creative program that involved a range of partnerships would be a valuable asset to complement existing approaches in dealing with the complex social dynamics in the Woolloomooloo community.
- Utilising the creative arts as a way of bringing factions together allows for an opportunity for groups based around difference to explore their sense of belonging in the community individually, before bringing them to a discussion table on an equal footing to work through community concerns and challenges.
- Tackling these issues will involve a combination of short to medium and long term aims, working across ages and demographics.

Short to Medium Term:

- **A WOOLLOMOOLOO STORY to be remounted in a different internal location** specifically for the local residents. This would enable an opportunity for their honest interaction with the issues and feedback about the dynamics separately and safely.
- Followed up with a plan of **continuing to do future outdoor performances in Woolloomooloo** with the collaboration of the police, to give the maximum amount of rough sleepers the possibility of engaging in arts programs, and with long term aim of getting the different parts of the community to the same shows and locations to have a discussion.
- Engaging school aged children and **Plunkett St School in drama workshops** centred around community issues and stories arising from living in Woolloomooloo, thereby investing in future community leadership.
- Increasing awareness of existing programs and promoting cross-service partnerships by producing an event such as **a cultural festival that involves showcases and celebrates the creative talents in Woolloomooloo**. The creative model would be an opportunity to begin community cross-factional interaction in a non-confronting way. This event would have an emphasis on accessibility, encouraging community members to access creative programs outside their particular service.

Long Term:

- Some of the standover figures in the community actually grew up in Woolloomooloo and have a strong affinity with the area. A long term initiative of **engaging with standover figures in the community** whilst being highly controversial, has enormous potential for the long term safety issues in the neighbourhood, but would involve multiple service partnerships, tolerance, time and dedication.

Beck Ronkson
Artistic Director, Milk Cate Theatre

PROJECT BRIEF

A small-scale scoping study with the homeless community of Woolloomooloo to assess the possibility of setting up a sustainable theatre and/or arts program with them and in partnership with the services they access.

City of Sydney criteria:

- Undertake direct consultation and relationship building with the homeless community in Woolloomooloo (primarily the rough sleepers) and with local welfare service providers, residents and businesses;
- Produce a Milk Crate Theatre show in Woolloomooloo encouraging maximum exposure and participation; and
- Extend an invitation to the homeless community in Woolloomooloo to regular Milk Crate Theatre shows at Edward Eagar Lodge.
- Define a proposal for a community cultural development project, should it be appropriate.

Time frame: 10 June, 2008 to 30 June, 2009. A total of 120 hours was committed to the project (approximately 4 hours a week from November 2008 to March 2009, this increased towards the end of the project).

Study conducted by: Alison Richardson, Milk Crate Theatre's Community Project Facilitator, in collaboration with Beck Ronkson, Milk Crate Theatre's Artistic Director.

REPORT

STAGE 1: CONNECTING & ENGAGING

This stage involved:

- Gaining awareness of what cultural activities exist in the area. This was achieved through questioning service providers and locals, and also through the Woolloomooloo Community Cultural Map. Visits were made to Walla Mulla, the creative arts space at Hope Street, Artspace, Juanita Nielsen Centre and Mary McDonald Activity Centre.
- Gaining awareness of existing services that assist the homeless and disadvantaged in Woolloomooloo. This was achieved through a meeting with the stakeholders in the project and attendance at the Woolloomooloo Inter-service Providers (WISP) meeting.
- Establishing trust and a rapport with the rough sleepers. This was achieved through introductions from Mike Fish (Public Space Liaison Officer, City Of Sydney) and workers at Hope Street. Time was also spent in Hope Street's café at their Sunday morning breakfast and church service, and attendance at one Homeless Voice meeting.
- Collecting one rough sleeper's story in order for it to be used as the basis of a forum theatre style performance for the community. This was achieved by numerous visits to Woolloomooloo to listen to and get to know the rough sleepers in the area.
- Meeting with local children from the Year 5/6 class at Plunkett St Primary to gauge their perspective on living and going to school in Woolloomooloo. Alison visited the class of about 10 students twice. The first visit was to conduct a drawing exercise to prompt discussion about their current impression of Woolloomooloo and also what their ideal Woolloomooloo would look like. This visit was on the day of the show in Tom Uren Square and promoted the show to the young people. Some of the kids turned up early and offered to take fliers around on their bikes to residents to get more people to the show.

Connecting with a community, establishing rapport, gaining respect and trust takes time so the majority of the project time was allocated to this stage of the project. Given the project brief, we began by focusing on hearing from rough sleepers.

A basic human need seems almost palpable in the Woolloomooloo community. This is the need to belong to and to connect somebody or something. Some turn to religion, some to each other, some to their pets, to their community, to their art, writing or music, to their family or friends. Some may believe they have no where to turn and instead prefer to escape and turn to drugs and alcohol to numb the pain, while away time and get high to forget why they are there. Many find the streets around the Matthew Talbot and Hope Street as a place to belong as it's not far from those other basic human needs- food and shelter and access to amenities such as showers, washing machines and recreational facilities. The rough sleepers also receive a sense of comfort and comradeship from being in an immediate community of people in similar situations to themselves. Some used to sleep rough on the streets of Woolloomooloo and have found housing elsewhere but still spend their day in Woolloomooloo on the streets because they call it home.

However, it became obvious very quickly that we couldn't focus on rough sleepers without also investigating where they are positioned in relationship to the multiple other voices in the community.

Throughout Stage 1 of the project many of the voices that exist in the Woolloomooloo community were uncovered. Amongst these were the voices of those:

- People new to the community who may either walk with trepidation, *'I feel like I'm walking on egg shells around here'* or cause trouble through lack of respect for others and the rules they have in place on the street (the 'blow ins'), *'We respect each other here & where we sleep, it's the other people that just came in here, stir up trouble & leave.'*
- New to being homeless who are either surprised by the amount of services for those that are homeless, *'Why would you get off the streets when you can get three free meals a day, a hot shower, your clothes cleaned and Foxtel? It's too easy to be homeless' or shocked* by some people's ungratefulness to those trying to help them, *'I thought I'd develop a sense of compassion for these people, but I haven't, it's the opposite.'*
- That have lived or worked in the area for a long period of time and have seen many changes both positive & negative, *'Noticed the amount of people who are homeless has risen & the type of people who are homeless. More drug affected, more mental health issues, it was here before but have become more apparent, their needs are higher. And more young people.'*
- That are unemployed passing the time by chatting, smoking and drinking either at Hope St's café, in the parks, outside the Fish & Chip Shop or on the streets, *'A lot of us like to light up and have chat, I call it conversation currency, a cigarette.'*
- Sleeping rough on the streets, some through choice some not, *'It (Woolloomooloo) seems like one of the better places to survive. If you've got a bad record then you can't get a rental & if you don't have the money upfront for a bond then you can't move into a boarding house, so really there is no accommodation as they can't get their foot in the door. And there is not nearly as many boarding houses around; even though they were poorly run they did service a need.'*
- That are homeless & disadvantaged but currently being accommodated at Matthew Talbot Hostel.
- Being active contributors to the community by volunteering at Hope St's café, attending community events, attending Sunday morning breakfasts or church services.
- Of the children and the people that work in the area such as police, social workers, community workers, teachers, shop owners.

All these voices make up the Woolloomooloo community and make it into the community that it is. It is a community where everyone knows everyone - like a country town in the middle of a city. It must be noted, however, that there is a very wealthy element to Woolloomooloo that was not investigated in this scoping study.

'Woolloomooloo is kinda like an oasis in the heart of the city, a community in the heart of the city where people live and locals can contribute enormously to the area as workers, parents and families, there's generations of people here and it has been this way for many many years.... there's just a really strong sense of family and community here.'

'In the four years I've been here I have housed 61 people and those people still come here to the café, they still ring me they are now part of Hope St, part of a community even though they don't live in Woolloomooloo they still see it as where they came from.'

'Always get a hello, you walk out of your house and you've got lots of situations where you're lending a hand, there is a firm community value there that everyone contributes to. A community feeling where everyone shares their story so in that sense you don't feel so isolated...in all the communities I've lived in Woolloomooloo has the strongest and firmest set of community values because you get together in precinct meetings and housing meetings.'

It was through the process of hearing all these voices, opinions and perspectives that the relationships between members of the community both positive and negative also became apparent. It is the dynamics between people that are at the core of any community especially one as concentrated and condensed in feel as Woolloomooloo.

From this study the main tensions that were uncovered in Woolloomooloo were between:

- Some of the residents and the rough sleepers;
- Residents and the services that aim to help the homeless;
- Rough sleepers & those who were 'blow ins' to the streets; and
- Dominating 'stand over' figures & the rest of the community.

'The residents at first wanted to move them (rough sleepers) completely out, bring in a whole heap of police and just march them on. But we're working with them to say they are just going to come back anyway as it's the only place with shelter. So they have agreed to move them out of Tom Uren Square as it's housing department land but they can sleep under the bridges as it's either railway or council land.'

'Core group of 6- 8 residents very anti Hope St & people who are homeless as they believe they have a right to live here with out all the 'vermin' and in safety but the rest of the residents agree that they don't want all the homeless around in their living areas but they are OK with them staying under the bridges. So the majority rules that they can stay but just not in their living spaces- so in front of Chemist, doctor's & supermarket.'

As these tensions were uncovered it was deemed important to interweave some of these relationships and tensions into the script that was being developed for the show. The script then became not just about one rough sleeper's story but more about Woolloomooloo as a community allowing various voices to be represented who would then have the chance, through the playback scenes, to discuss these.

STAGE 2: A WOOLLOOMOOLOO STORY

This stage involved:

- A forum theatre show being written by Milk Crate Theatre's Artistic Director, Beck Ronkson in consultation with myself (Alison Richardson), the rough sleeper whose story it was (remaining anonymous for this study), Fiona Simpson (social worker from Hope Street) & the actors who would be performing the show.
- Rehearsing of the show (2 X 4 hour rehearsals). The story giver was invited and present at the final rehearsal to give feedback to the actors and to Milk Crate Theatre.

- The show being performed at Edward Eager Lodge, Surry Hills on Thursday 19th February, 7 pm and also an outdoor performance in the heart of Woolloomooloo at Tom Uren Square on Monday 23rd February, 4 pm.

A sense of belonging was perhaps the strongest theme represented in *A Woolloomooloo Story*. It showed one person's journey from being taken away from his mother at 6 years of age & ending up on the streets at aged 54. As previously mentioned it also became relevant to open out the story to include the Woolloomooloo community at large with the rough sleeper's story as the through line in the play.

This was the first time that Milk Crate had attempted a show such as this outdoors and with this community. It was very successful in engaging people and the use of amplified sound really helped to achieve this. Other strengths were that the show was in the heart of Woolloomooloo & attempted to bring together as many members of the community as possible something that happens very rarely in Woolloomooloo.

Whilst our initial brief was to engage rough sleepers, our discoveries around the lack of dialogue between different factions in the community highlighted the potential of using the show as a catalyst to generate that dialogue, and we attempted to pitch it accordingly. We noted in our attempt that it was a good outlet for rough sleepers, but the nature of performing it within that specific environment (in an area where rough sleepers congregate) did raise the issue of whether an opposing view could be put by a local resident without them being targeted. Safety was an issue and therefore it was no surprise that some of those voices were not heard.

There were a number of practical things that we'd do differently in order to make such an outdoor performance even more effective – such as having more workers on hand to manage crowd control and a clear system of responsibility with regards to managing peoples behaviour; set seating right up against the stage so there isn't a distracting thoroughfare between audience and show & other staging considerations to minimise disruptions.

The audience consisted of approximately 100 people who all enjoyed a BBQ provided by Hope St. It was important to try and begin the show whilst the BBQ was being served as to try & engage people who where there primarily for the food, this group mainly being the rough sleepers. Present in the audience were residents, service providers from the area, council members, arts workers, rough sleepers.

See Appendix A for the script of *A WOOLLOMOOLOO STORY*.

STAGE 3: POST SHOW FEEDBACK & RESPONSES

This stage involved:

- Gathering of audience member's responses to the show. This was achieved through post show audio interviews, written surveys and informal discussions immediately after the show & also in ensuing weeks.

The general response from the audience was that they really enjoyed the show, particularly the interaction from the audience in the playback scenes with a lot mentioning how fantastic the kids in the audience were. There was also a general feeling that having the show outdoors and in the heart of Woolloomooloo made it immediate, relevant & also accessible for all.

A second visit to the Year 5/6 class at Plunkett St Primary School occurred to conduct short post show interviews with the young people about what they thought of the show and would they like

to do any performing themselves. They really remembered a lot of the key themes and issues in the show and all really enjoyed participating. They particularly were able to identify with the Lucy character as she was a child that had grown up in Woolloomooloo. Upon discussion with their principal and teacher they both agree that they would love to have something like this continued with Plunkett St and Milk Crate Theatre.

From one worker in the area there was a feeling that the show didn't engage the rough sleepers enough as they found the subject matter too confronting and some could not readily understand the concept of the acting out of scenarios as opposed to it happening in 'real life.'

See Appendix B for Audience Feedback.

OVERALL FINDINGS

It is important to note the limitations of the scoping study here before our recommendations. In the four hours/ week that were allocated to the project only a limited rapport was able to be established when there is not such consistency. Alison made sure she regularly attended the Sunday morning breakfasts in an attempt to compensate for this. Being a young woman undertaking the study on her own was a limitation in itself, as proved in an incident early on in the project where she was cornered and physically threatened by a rough sleeper in an altered state. She was also warned about a couple of community members so didn't feel as confident to be going to certain areas alone. Core themes that became apparent from our discussions were often centred on safety, belonging and social dynamics.

Safety: A major issue of safety shared by both rough sleepers and residents are 'Stand over' figures in the community who intimidate, try to dominate and prey on those more vulnerable than themselves. This in turn breeds fear and distrust amongst the community. In terms of rough sleepers it is only over time that they either begin to find their rank in the community, keep to themselves or run away. It would seem that acknowledging and working with these Stand over figures to understand the reasons behind their actions, getting them to the discussion table about their sense of belonging in the community, would be useful, albeit difficult and controversial. Utilising their leadership strengths has the potential to be transformative, but would be a long term initiative. Regardless of this, it seems that at present involving the support of Police in running any community programs is necessary.

Belonging & Social Dynamics: A strong sense of community is central to Woolloomooloo. However, a feeling of belonging is often hampered by a breakdown in communication between different parts of the community. Strong, inter-factional tensions exist and unless more time is dedicated to addressing this social dynamic it appears that current disturbances will keep recycling. Any community program undertaken in the future that wishes to work with this therefore needs to engage with all the factions in this dynamic, particularly in terms of both future cultural programs and the City of Sydney Woolloomooloo Improvements Plan. Given the sensitive safety issues at play, this may have to occur initially with individual groups before trying to get all factions together. It was noted existing work is already being undertaken by organisations (such as Hope St putting on community BBQs and free breakfasts) that draw out members of the community to connect and socialise with each other, but more of this could occur in different guises.

Cultural Programs & Partnerships: It appears that some rough sleepers respond well to arts based programs that are continuous and drop in, such as existing visual arts programs in Woolloomooloo. However, for the majority of rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, given their transient lifestyles, committing to an ongoing workshop program (such as a drama workshop

program) would probably not be effective. More effective would be engaging them in one off events that they can be a part of without having to commit to a long term process. There are currently visual art classes at Walla Mulla, Hope St and Matthew Talbot and also dance classes at Juanita Neilson Centre. Whilst there would be no need to duplicate what already exists, there does seem to be value in raising awareness of existing arts practices to promote cross-service/venue partnerships so as to avoid siloing of services and community members. The different factions in the community are currently reflected in these silos with people rarely attending programs outside their particular group/vicinity.

RECOMMENDATIONS & FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Why set up a sustainable creative program in Woolloomooloo? It would be a valuable asset to complement existing approaches in dealing with the complex social dynamics in the Woolloomooloo community, which are at the heart of Woolloomooloo tensions. Utilising the creative arts as a way of bringing factions together allows for an opportunity for groups based around difference to explore their sense of belonging in the community individually, before bringing them to a discussion table on an equal footing to work through community concerns and challenges. Our recommendations reflect this commitment to tackling these issues and involve a combination of short to medium and long term aims, working across ages and demographics.

Short to Medium term: As *A Woolloomooloo Story* dealt directly with the inter-factional dynamics of the community, we would recommend that **the show be remounted in a different location** specifically for the local residents. This would enable an opportunity for their honest interaction with the issues and feedback about the dynamics separately and safely.

To give the maximum amount of rough sleepers the possibility of engaging in arts programs, this could then be followed up with a plan of **continuing to do future outdoor performances in Woolloomooloo** with the collaboration of the police and with long term aim of getting the different parts of the community to the same shows and locations to have a discussion.

There was a high level of interest from the local school aged children in the show. Many in the community (across the various factional groups) were impressed with their feedback and interaction, as they presented a unique voice that sits apart from the dynamics and have the potential to appeal to all, whilst also representing the future community leaders in the neighbourhood. They saw value in engaging this age group and **Plunkett St School in drama workshops** centred around community issues and stories arising from living in Woolloomooloo, thereby investing in future community leadership.

There also could be a need for increasing and promoting cross-service partnerships by producing an event such as **a cultural festival that involves showcases and celebrates the creative talents in Woolloomooloo**. The creative model would be an opportunity to begin community cross-factional interaction in a non-confronting way. This event would have an emphasis on accessibility, encouraging community members to access creative programs outside their particular service.

Long Term: Some of the standover figures in the community actually grew up in Woolloomooloo and have a strong affinity with the area. A long term initiative of **engaging with standover figures in the community** whilst being highly controversial, has enormous potential for the long term safety issues in the neighbourhood, but would involve multiple service partnerships, tolerance, time and dedication.

APPENDIX A

A WOOLLOOMOOLOO STORY

A story about Neighbours, sleeping rough and the struggle to belong

Narra:

This is Leonard's Story. But, it is also Leanne's Story. And, it is Susie and Lily's story too. In fact, it is the story of a neighbourhood. A neighbourhood facing difficult relationships.

But back to Leonard. These days, Leonard sleeps rough on the streets. But we thought it was important to go back in time and give you a bit of his life history. Leonard's history.

Leonard had a tough time as a child. His dad was always away in the bush logging, so he was never around, and his mum, who Leonard loved dearly, would spend most of her time in the pub. Now Leonard's favourite thing was to go looking for her. It was like hide and seek – and it was much more fun than going to school!

SCENE #1: Leonard taken away from his mum

We see Leonard as a little kid. He is wandering around looking for his mum

Leonard: Mum! Mum! Have you seen Mary Davies?

Drunk Passer By: Try the Stag and whistle son, I think I saw her there.

Narra: He was only 6 Years old, when he was taken away and put into a boys home..

Leonard: Where am I going?

Policewoman: It'll be better for you, come on

She walks him off holding his hand, but he resists

Leonard: NO! MUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUM!

Narra:

Leonard was taken away from his mum. But Mum loved him and she was gonna fight it out in court. Tragically Leonard didn't know at the time that was her intention. What he also didn't know was, that during the court case, Mum was killed in a car accident.

It was years later after reading his welfare records that he learnt the truth. Leonard was devastated.

PAUSE

So....Leonard was put into a boy's home. At the boys' home, the kids were "**looked after**", but no-one "**cared**" for them, no-one "**loved**" them. Leonard grew up in a whole series of these homes. Here, his only role models were the other neglected boys. Physical and sexual assault by staff were regular occurrences. Next he was sent to a foster home. And then to a priest's

house where he was sexually abused by the priest...and...then returned to yet another home. After all that (maltreatment), Leonard had very little respect for authority and had developed survival skills, skills that meant to keep safe you ran with the wolves. As he got older and into more trouble the homes became correctional homes.

In background boys form a line, military style. They leave, with Leonard nicking the wallet from the person in front.

They were run like the military – Lots of rules, and not a lot of love. And with no-one caring, the boys just got into more trouble – taking risks, stealing things. Why would you care about things when no-one else cares about you?

But there was one youth worker who did care. Tim. Leonard really looked up to Tim. He was the first worker who took an interest in those boys, who actually got along with them, had fun with them. Tim saw the good in Leonard and took him under his wing.

SCENE #2: The worker who saw the good in him
We are at a boys home, Leonard has a painting under his arm

Tim: Hey mate hows it going?

Leonard: Oh yeah alright

Tim: What you got there

Leonard: Nothing. Just my painting from school

Tim: You've been going to school – That's Great ! School's good for you. Puts brains in ya head. Hey can I have a look?

Leonard: Yeah. Whatever.

Tim: Geez, man, that is really good. Really good. What are you going to do with it?

Leonard is secretly chuffed. He feigns cool

Leonard: Dunno

Tim: Hey I've got some paints and brushes in my office. You can borrow them...if you ever want to paint here after school.

Leonard: Oh yeah

Tim: Yeah – I don't mind havin' a bit of a dabble in the oils myself. I can give them to you now if you like.

Leonard: Oh, I don't wanna paint now

Tim: that's ok – you can just give them back to me later.

Leonard: Oh. Alright yeah.

Other worker: Hey Tim! You're needed on 2nd Floor mate –

Tim: (unlocking the door to his room) OK – there you go – they're just in there on the desk Ok – close the door on your way out

Leonard: But I'm not allowed

Tim: Its Ok – I trust ya mate!

Narra:

And Tim really did trust Leonard. **And...Tim cared. Leonard had never really felt that before.** Its amazing what **a little** trust and responsibility can do for a young person. Things started to pick up for Leonard. Something had shifted now that he felt someone cared. He started to go to school more - he painted more. Then one day Leonard overheard something that changed it all....

There are some guys circled around tim talking. We see Leonard around the corner, secretly listening

Other guys: You know you shouldn't let Leonard borrow your stuff

Tim: Why not? He's a good guy

Kylie : no he's not. You don't know them – you can't trust the buggers. They're always nicking stuff off people –

Eliza: they're bloody good liars too

Tim: really?

Narra:

Leonard had heard enough. His trust was shattered. What was he thinking – that Tim actually cared? As far as he was concerned, Tim was just like all the others, they didn't really care who Leonard was.

Leonard: (Picking the lock to Tim's door) Well, if that's what you think Tim, maybe you're right. Maybe I am just a thief!

He smashes stuff up and takes money, Tim bursts in

Tim: Hey! What do you think you're doing!

Leonard: So now you know the truth don't ya tim! This is the real me! Now ya know you can't trust me.

Tim tries to stop him, but Leonard pushes him out of the way violently and sticks his finger up as he goes.

SCENE #3: The storm & the sermon on the mount

Narra:

Leonard was hurt. He felt betrayed, and he really went off the rails. He stopped obeying any rules...and it wasn't long before he ended up in Jail. Jail was alright ! At least you knew where you stood in jail. It was tough, and bloody horrible sometimes, but he felt like he had a "PLACE"

there. And really, he never felt like he'd belonged anywhere in his life. But the time came when he was released from prison, and he didn't have anywhere to go to. He went to halfway houses, and that was just it – he always felt “HALF WAY” between here and there – never “ANCHORED” anywhere. One day, it all got too much, and he found himself down at the beach. He decided it was time to end his life. He didn't belong anywhere so what was the point? But it was a stormy night, and the wind had other ideas....

We see Leonard, breaking a bottle ready to slash his wrists. Others making sounds of wind/storm in background, Leonard reacting to the wind pushing him in foreground

Smashes bottle....then

The wind: GO HOME LEONARD!

Leonard: (yelling at the wind) How? What's home?

Narra:

He didn't get an answer but he didn't kill himself. He left the beach.
He read the Sermon on the Mount....and it gave him some solace.

Jesus figure/Leonard: Don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

Leonard sighs and lies down

SCENE #4: The streets of Woolloomooloo – Hope Street and Matthew Talbot

Narra:

For a period after that, Leonard tried to settle down. Along the way he had a few girlfriends...he even got married, had kids....but that's a whole other story for another time. For him, his past was too much and he felt too wild to know love and felt it too difficult to change. He ended up sleeping on and off on the streets of Woolloomooloo. For Leonard, Woolloomooloo was a fascinating place of dreams – fulfilled and broken. There were other rough sleepers there too, and often, like Leonard they took drugs and alcohol to numb the pain, to escape the fact that they didn't really have anywhere else to go. Due to the train overpass, there was a lot of shelter, so it was easier to find a place to sleep. Food vans provided free food. And there were places to shower, which was a welcome relief when you were sleeping rough. But this was also a neighbourhood. And just like all neighbourhoods, neighbours don't always get along.

There is a knock at Hope Street's door - it's a local resident who is very distressed

Deni: Hello, can I help you?

Leanne: Is this Hope street?

Deni: yes.

Leanne: I want to make a complaint. Could you put me in touch with someone who I can make a complaint to.

Deni: That would probably be me.

Leanne: I want to know what your services are doing about the crime that is directly caused by you being here

Deni: Sorry?

Leanne: I know you supposedly do good work. But I live here, and I can tell you, that the presence of your services is directly related to the lack of safety in this suburb. I can't walk at home at night, I'm harassed in the streets and last night my eldest son was mugged by some of those homeless guys! So what are you doing about it? I've already written to council

Deni: I'm sorry your son got mugged, sorry what was your name?

Leanne: Leanne

Deni: look I'm sorry about your son Leanne, I really am, but regarding what you said about us, this centre doesn't BRING crime here, we house the homeless, and assist them to get off the street.

Leanne: We both know those people are in this area BECAUSE you are here. You and the Matthew Talbot. There are too many people sleeping out around here - you don't see it in other suburbs – why here? Can you answer that?

Deni: This centre not being here is not going to stop people becoming homeless. In fact, if you took us away, there would probably be more people on the street. Possibly more crime.

Leanne: So you think its fair that I can't walk home at night? I work hard, I pay my taxes, I contribute to society. You think its fair that I have to live my life in fear - just because I happen to live in this suburb? My son and I have just as much a right to be safe as anyone else!

Deni: We are here because people here need to be helped

Leanne: what about my son? What about my rights?

Leonard: why don't YOU move somewhere else! This woman is an angel -

Deni: Alright Leonard, that's enough ok.

Leanne: so if other people like me don't feel safe and can't live here, then it will only be the homeless – is that what you want? How on god's earth will that help anything?*

Leanne walks away. She walks past a sign

NO DRINKING NO FEEDING PIGEONS NO CAMPING OVERNIGHT NO SELLING DRUGS NO SELLING YOURSELF
--

Leonard: Do they really think that is going to make a difference?

Deni: I don't know

Leonard: You know love's the only real thing that can make a difference

Voice: ha! there's no love around here – except what you can buy!

PLAYBACK #1:

So lets go back to the moment when:

Leanne says we both know those people come here because you are here

Freeze Folder Moment *: AFTER – How on god's earth will that help anything?

SCENE #5: The streets of Woolloomooloo – Susie and Lily

Living in Woolloomooloo wasn't easy for Leanne. Fear had really taken its toll. There were others too....Susie and Lily also lived down the street in Woolloomooloo in a place from the Dept of Housing. They had their own struggles too, and every day they saw people like Leonard sleeping rough on the streets.

Lily: mum we're out of milk

Susie: well run up to Nick's and get some – but don't talk to anyone ok?

Lily: Ok!

Music/ Movement scene – She goes up the street – we see the scene from her perspective, Lily walking on the spot to music, as though she is walking along. Others come in close to her and then fade away to the background, like they are coming in and out of her vision. people there – using, lying down, jumping out, fighting, a number are nice to her (including Leonard), but others yell, most don't take any notice.... Music stops.

ORDER OF LILY'S WALK

Mike - got any spare change?

Eliza - hello darl you look nice

Moz - shut that bloody dog up!

Mike -Move along -

Eliza -vomit

Moz – (*Whistles*)...daisy lee anyone seen daisy lee?

Mike - binni i haven't finished talking to ya

Eliza - (*lovers*) - but i love you

Moz – (*lovers*) no you don't...

Mike – see ya up at the talbot Steve

Eliza – (*drug deal*)

Moz -what are you looking at?

Mike - g'day lily you having a good day?

Eliza -hey Joe can i bum a ciggie?

Joe/Moz -nah gave up - Hey Lily where you off to by yourself – does your mum know you're out?

Lily: yeah – I'm just getting some milk

She goes back, We see it all in double time reversed.

LILY'S WALK REVERSE

Eliza - has anyone got a ciggie!
Mike - seeya lily!

Moz - I'm telling ya i'm good for it
Eliza - you betta be
Mike - dinner was alright but they ran out of dessert!

Moz – *(lovers)* – I saw ya wif him, kissin...
Eliza – *(lovers)* - ?
Mike - Binni i'm still trying to talk to ya!

Moz - Daisy Lee? Man am I going to be in trouble if I don't find her
Eliza - hey darl - you got your milk good girl
Mike - hey you got any change? gee thanks!

As she arrives at home she steps around something on the doorstep.

Lily: Hey mum, there's some stuff on the veranda again

Susie: is it poo or wee?

Lily: ummm

Susie: god damn! I try and keep this place neat and what happens!!!. Well get the hose and rinse it down again – we've got an inspection tomorrow and they're likely to kick us out if they see that

Lily: but its not us!

Susie: (frustrated and losing her cool) well I can't afford to lose this house can I? Why does it have to be like this! bastards!

Lily: some of the guys are alright

Susie: don't you dare talk to those people you hear me? They are a bunch of junkies and paedophiles!

Lily: but

Susie: No butts! Get the hose *Lily starts to hose it off...*

SCENE # 6: The streets of Woolloomooloo - Leonard

Narra: Leonard knew lots of people sleeping rough in Woolloomooloo. It was like that – everyone knew everyone. And the Rough Sleepers felt everybody else in the suburb looking down at them. Leonard struggled with it daily – he'd worked hard to turn himself around from being the 'bad guy' he'd been as a young man. But watching the devastation poverty brought on others, well, it hurt his spirit. He never stopped searching for love, for his 'angels' as he called them. Luckily for him, he found four of those angels that could counter his pain. 1. Joe. Now Joe really was his friend – he was kind to Leonard and looked after him. He was a good guy. 2. A great local social worker called Deni. 3. The sermon on the mount. And finally 4. His Art. These were the only things stopping him going down to the beach to kill himself again. When he painted, he forgot everything.

We see Leonard painting. Movement/Music scene – escapism –

Slow motion - Leonard is painting – first verse, then Kylie & Eliza stand behind, and bring one arm out at a time to music so in the end he has all these arms coming out from behind him with brushes painting too (like hindu god with many arms)..

Jesus/Leonard: let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works

* Move whole piece around sideways – Moz holding painting like canvas, then placing it on easel behind

Deni: Hey Leonard that's looking great!

Joe: did you paint this?

Leonard: oh yeah. Do you want it Joe?

Joe: Really?

Leonard: yeah – its yours. I only paint for other people anyway.

Joe: Thanks Leonard! I'm going to put it up on my kitchen wall at home.

Deni: You got some more I can up in an exhibition we're having?

Leonard is chuffed. Leonard walks outside carrying his painting. He's in a good mood. He sits down to have a ciggie.

Maggie: ay Leonard, can I have a ciggie?

Jesus figure/Leonard: Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you

Leonard: sure

Maggie: Can I have some of that grog you got there?

Leonard: yep – pour me one too eh?

Guy 1: Hey mate – can I get some help over here? Can I have that blanket you got?

Leonard: yeah – take whatever you need – its just stuff, nothing more!

Meanwhile we see some other guys Joeing his wallet. Leonard keeps drinking doesn't notice.

Leonard: I got some ciggies here too– hey! Hey! Where's my wallet? WHO'S GOT IT? WHICH ONE OF YOU CRAZIES HAS GOT MY WALLET! EH?

Maggie: Hey Leonard, settle down

Leonard: How can I? That had my ID, my health care card

Maggie: That's life eh

Leonard starts to darken, he starts drinking more. Another person walks past

Leonard: Its you ya bastard isn't it. Its him! That bastard stole from me –

Guy 1: Shut up ya fool

Leonard: Don't call me a fool, I'll pummel ya into the ground!

Guy 1: (Comes closer, repeats to his face) Fool.

Leonard: Fool! Why don't ya be a real man and face me instead of being a piece of low life scum!

The other guy comes dangerously close then walks away

Others: yeah!

Building up now to another person – drinking more and more

SAY THAT AGAIN! THAT DOG'S ALWAYS SNIFFIN MY SHIT!

Maggie: well its your own fault isn't it – you were the one handing out ciggies and giving everything away – people are gonna take advantage of ya

Leonard: Well you did!

Maggie: yeah, so?

Leonard: Give to him who begs from you – sermon on the mount

Maggie: yeah sure, but not here mate. Not on the street. You're just asking for it.

SCENE #7: ruining his painting

Narra: Leonard was very, very upset now. Maggie was right - Why should he give to others when this is the thanks he gets? He'd lost everything. In one hour things had gone from great....to absolute crap.

Deni: Maybe its around here somewhere

Leonard: yeah right

Joe: how bout you come home with me and I'll cook you some dinner

Leonard: later

Joe: so what, you're gonna stay here and drink

Leonard: I'm gonna find the bastard that nicked my wallet and get it back!!

Deni: Maybe you could go and do some painting – that might take your mind off it for a while

Leonard: I don't want to take my mind off it – I want to find it! I don't want to paint your stupid painting I JUST WANT MY STUFF BACK! WHAT'S THE POINT OF PAINTING WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN KEEP YOUR STUFF!

He's drinking heavily now.

Deni: I can see you're hurt mate, I don't want to see you start slashing yourself again alright?

Leonard: you know what life is about – nothing! No point, no reason at all to be here.

Joe: what were you saying to me this morning – that stuff from the sermon on the mount “let your light shine before men.... (that they may see your good works)

Leonard cuts Joe Off-

Leonard: let your light shine! Ha! I don't have any light to shine. Its all darkness. crap. There's no point TO ANY OF THIS!

Joe Leaves. Leonard gets out the painting

Deni: hey that's one thing - its good they didn't take the painting

Leonard: oh yeah – that's great. That's because the painting isn't worth anything.

Deni: That's not true, its worth something to you – to all of us. its worth something to Joe – you were going to give it to him as a present. That's special to him Leonard.

Leonard: That's crap - this is what the paintings worth -*

Deni: don't Leonard, you'll really regret that later on...

Leonard makes a big show of destroying the painting.

Deni: Leonard! Why did you do that?

Leonard: you just care more about the painting than the man! About your stupid exhibition! That's all you care about

Deni picks up the painting and walks off

PLAYBACK #2

So lets go back to the moment when:

Deni says: Maybe you could do a painting that might take your mind off it for a while..

Freeze Folder: *Leonard is just about to destroy the painting*

This is what the paintings worth

SCENE 8 – Neighbours

Lily's music comes back on – we see her walking again with her mum, Leonard is in front, blocking their way.

Leonard: Its you ya bastard isn't it. Its him! That bastard stole from me –

Leonard: Don't call me a fool, I'll pummel ya into the ground! Fool! Why don't ya be a real man and face me instead of being a piece of low life scum!

Susie: Come on lily, just keep walking oK?

Lily: But why is he so angry?

Susie: I don't know but just ignore him

Leonard: (directly to them now) Yeah, just IGNORE ME – JUST PRETEND I'M NOT HERE – YOU THINK YOU'RE WORTH MORE THAN ME DON'T YA? YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN ME – why? You don't know NOTHING about ME!

Susie keeps walking

Leonard: LOOK AT ME! Why don't you guys even look at me?

He gets close to Susie and Lily, Susie goes into protective overdrive

Susie: Look at you! Because you are screaming at us, that's why! Because we don't know what you'll do next –Because you're drunk and off your face and probably want to kill us!

Leonard: I Wouldn't kill anyone, not again

Susie: oh my god
she grabs lily and pushes her inside –

Lily: don't yell at Leonard mummy – he's nice

Leonard: I wouldn't
There's no love left...where are the angels? Maybe Lily is angel – (gesturing at Lily)

Susie: Stay away from us – you hear?

Leonard: You don't have to be afraid of me.

Susie: I don't have to be afraid of you! I have to protect myself. I have to protect my daughter*. And you guys, don't give a crap about us, you just come and piss at our door and yell at us in the street. Why should we care about you?

Leonard: everyone is always judging

Susie: Well what do you expect! You could go across the street and get a bed...

Leonard: That place sucks. They won't let me stay if I won't make my bed. Just like the bloody military home I grew up in. I had that enough! I know all about institutions alright lady. I lived it already and don't need anymore oppression! I don't have to take it!

He switches suddenly crying..susie goes inside.

Nobody cares. Enough...the devil never gives up...where have all the angels gone?

Joe approaches

Joe: Oh there you are ! Come on mate, why don't you let it go for a bit, come back to mine and I'll make you some dinner

Leonard: You're the closest thing I've got to an angel mate

Joe: yeah, yeah, alright.

Narra: And this is where we end our story, for tonight.

PLAYBACK #3

<p>So lets go back to the moment when: Susie says Just ignore him Folder Freeze moment: I have to protect my daughter</p>
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APPENDIX B

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

'I was surprised and impressed by the good mix of streeties and residents in the audience.'

'I enjoyed that the show was at Tom Uren Square; where lot of street sleepers live. It wouldn't have been the same in a theatre.'

'I absolutely loved it. I really enjoyed the style of performance- the use of narration moved things along & kept it fresh, engaging and exciting.'

'Great to have it at Tom Uren Square, in the heart of where the street sleepers are.'

'From the feedback that I got was that the Housing Dept really needed it, needed to get the message and the kids really enjoyed it.'

'The story was good but maybe targeting it to the wrong audience, maybe the same story but to the Housing Dept because then it's more of an educational thing.'

'The show and the Christmas party was the first time that we attempted to get everyone together. Great to see so many members of the community together.'

'I know the school would like it (the show) to go down there and I could see that as a fantastic thing. If you can target it at that age then that's a great thing, that's real education'

'All of the community thought it was great but I suppose the ten percent of the community- the homeless didn't like it.'

'Doing a show at a community BBQ, the school and the community near the school so where there used to be the festivals.'

'Where I'd like to target more with the performing would be the teenagers. The ones that have finished school, that are going to end up on the streets, the ones dealing the drugs and they are literally smart but they love to act. They're the ones that would really benefit from it. They are the ones between the ages 14-25yrs.'

'Participation, whole show was fantastic.'

'I was really impressed by the feedback from an audience member (male ex-streetie) that people should recognise the fact that there are 'streetie success stories.' The playback section overall was really interesting. It was great that the kids at the front got involved!'

'Engaging the rough sleepers...maybe by going under the bridge and talking to them and letting them guide you and not focus on one story but all of them and not have a script.'

'The interaction from the onlookers and members of the audience.'

'Good outdoor area for putting on that type of drama.'

'The interaction with the audience - with their ideas that were very diverse.'

'The confrontation between residence and street sleepers.'

'Show provided community awareness and networking. Bravo!'

'The audience involvement, I felt the performers interacted really well with the street sleepers. I was very touched by the man in the audience who had been a street sleeper but who had managed to get off the streets, I found that very inspiring and also moving that he was willing to come back and offer suggestions during the performance.'

'I really enjoyed the show being at Woolloomooloo it brought an intensity and stark reality to the performance. The already layered piece was further enhanced by the buzz of the community which gave it a tangibility that was impossible to ignore. The Forum style theatre was also great, it gave people the opportunity to voice their opinions and see how things might be improved.'

'I loved that this was an opportunity for people of ALL ages and socio-economic backgrounds to witness and experience a national tragedy. It was great to see that the homeless community felt they had a voice through the show, and that the rest of the community could learn to understand the other side of life in a non-threatening and almost light-hearted way. The forum theatre style really helped with this.'

'I'd been waiting for Milk Crate to come down here for year so I was very excited when I heard that they were coming. My friend had performed in one in Surry Hills. But I had never got myself out of Woolloomooloo to have a look.'

'It (the show) captured so many issues that I'm passionate about. I cried, I laughed, I wanted to take part. I think I was a very worthwhile theatre production... if we could have it once a month, once every two months...'

'I think it (the show) could go around to all the centres.'

'I reckon they (the homeless) can stay in one way because it is their home but in another way I don't because it's dangerous for the kids too.'

'The show was really good & I enjoyed it and I hope it's on again one day.'

Audience impressions of Woolloomooloo

'That there is a real community there- diverse and possibly chaotic and fractured but a community. I loved being there with the kids and the dogs and the street sleepers. Now when I think of Woolloomooloo I will think of the buzz and excitement at Tom Uren place- I reckon that is the real community, not the rich people on the other side.'

'There are a lot of stories the reside in this area and there is a feeling that people would like to tell their stories- I'd like to come back and hear their stories.'

'The heartbreak of such a small area inhabiting the wealthiest and poorest people in Sydney and no interaction between the two.'

'That a strong community exists here, it may not look the same as the ones we are used to in our daily lives or on our TV sets, but it is just as real and just and human and just as important.'

'I got home and was bubbling over with excitement and I rang my mum and she asked why I was so happy and I just said , 'oh mum this Milkcrate Theatre is just so fantastic.'

'It's a good neighbourhood because all my friends are there but here are heaps of strangers and they are dangerous. They nearly took my friend once. So that's why I don't like them.'

APPENDIX C

HOMELESSNESS

By Trevor Martin

2008

What is it like, I have heard many ways to describe homelessness, but the way I would put it would simply be like, being in an empty room, inside a room, in the middle of a crowd. With every demon at your door, past, present and future.

I have spent six out of the last eight years walking that empty room, filling it with useless information, projecting words at each and every entrance to keep the wolves from taking everything including my very soul and protecting objects placed around me that normal Australians wouldn't even consider.

Things such as a blanket, or a couple of old butts from discarded cigarettes, meaningless objects picked up and carried faithfully, until the time comes when you can use what you have found, or trade them for some other need or addiction that you may have at the time.

Homelessness is a place where life shrinks at each passing day, where thoughts are mixed with past judgments, where a simple look can spark a torrent of anger, a place where you must stand and fight for your very life, lest you fall and surrender joining the swelling ranks of those already fallen, given way to the constant pressure to perform for those whom they have considered their betters.

But that is only the start of being homeless, for one day a whirlpool appears in the middle of the room that threatens to grab you and drag you down to a place were few ever return. A place were there is no understanding but that of your own, no reaching out for fear of being turned away, no acceptance for new friends because everyone you have trusted has let you down.

Homelessness is emptiness magnified by despair, it will cause you to constantly move from place to place, in the hope that just over the next hill, will be a garden were you can rest and gather your thoughts and strength.

For like all things that have been declared unacceptable to society, homelessness is scorned and laughed at by those passing by, it is a state were you are judged to be either a criminal or pervert a smelly stinking man old man that seems to be talking to himself, a nutter, a passing joke that brings a smile to those whom think they are better then you.

Homelessness has a constant need for adjustment, every were you go, any city, any state, society does not change, but once you are homeless and on the move, the homeless themselves shun you, and treat you like you do not belong amongst them, for the homeless that stay in one place like a big city gather in groups for companionship and protection, now judge those who come after them.

In writing this small letter I have only expressed the viewpoint of myself and not the opinion of others, each and every homeless person would tell you a different viewpoint of how they perceive homelessness.

I am sorry to say that there is no good news in being without a home, although there is a mindset that says homeless people are on the streets on purpose because they would rather spend their money on drugs and alcohol, I will say that although that may be right for a small percent of homeless, It was not done on purpose, it is only after some time and familiarity on the

streets, that you become attached to the life style, and what you were once trying to escape, now becomes home.

There are many ways to describe my situation and I could tell you tales of all my adventures in my homelessness, but it is not what we are about or how can we solve this increasing demand, we are human too, I have constantly watched the street people being generous to his fellow mates, supporting each other and watching out for each other, but on the other hand when I make friends I hear tales of pain and anger towards some friend who has forgotten them on their pay day, I do not know much about Sydney homeless, were I stay now is a men's shelter run by a church. I do not like it there, for several reasons, for one some drunks should be left out in the paddock or hosed down once a day for no one should have to put up with filth.

And for two the church institution is out dated, it reminds me of the welfare home the government put me in at six or so years old, I pay good money to live there, but still I have to make my own bed every day or they tell you of, well I don't know about you but I can have my bed however I wish, I don't like making my bed, for I was forced to make many beds, every day, for a very long time, in that welfare home.

Human rights is a great issue in all corners of the world but I live here in my country called Australia, my mother was born here and she is buried here, I am Australian but you do not think so, for you shun us like a disease, another reason why I don't like were I am is that every time you wait for a meal you have to pray in a group standing come on now people get real, who on gods earth does that at every meal, again it reminds me of the welfare home that I was in when I was young, I hated that place, they too pretended to care and nurture you while condemning you for being you, not that I am condemning the church, for they do try to help, but many homeless do not want help simply for the reason that it reminds them of an institution the way homeless centers are run so you figure it out.

If you are to help us homeless then you must figure out a way to intervene at the earliest possible time for once we have entered total despair, there is no turning back, I have seen the beast that separation can bring, men sleeping naked under a bush coming out only at night to feed from the bins, mental health and gambling are two of your biggest problems, but here in Sydney it seems to me that drug and alcohol related mental illness plays a great part.

I know that society does not want people hanging around sleeping on the streets but you do, and you must except that their will always be people on the streets, we rescue those who have lost their homes in other countries, yet we allow people in our own country to sleep in the gutter, I can not understand why you do not build shelters from the cold and rain, there are many people here that have come from other countries, they do not have any empowerment or know any family to rely on, it is time to bring back charity in the heart and not just in your pockets.

It is refreshing to see so many good people out there helping to bring some sort of friendship be it through food or just a friendly smile and I thank the universe for one special lady who saved me from total destruction, but there are not enough people to help unravel the many problems we as humans can entangle ourselves with.

But coming from a Christian view point I must warn all Christians to be aware of the wolves that come and feed on the truly poor and lost, I must admit that I do smoke drugs and that you, the people, do not like my vices, but in my eye's I need my addiction to carry on normally, for my mind has many ways in which it wants to go, but smoking keeps me focused on my art.

I love the lord Jesus if that's what you are wondering, but I am just a man and not the Christ, most Christians would call me a backslider or an anti-Christ, I call myself just a man, wrapped in a body of flesh, there are many things ideas and beliefs that one can get to know and many of

them if not all have a truth to tell, but I as a person do not judge another's belief, if anything I will ponder upon what someone has said and often give my opinion days later after I have digested their thoughts.

You asked me what I think of homelessness; well to tell you the truth it has its ups and downs.

I've been homeless many times in the last 8 years, sometimes it is fun for you can find some good people in every place that you go I guess, it all depends on my attitude and how I am feeling when entering each place that I have been too.

When I am depressed and feeling sad I don't make many friends for people will stay away from you if don't talk.