

MELBOURNE HOUSING CRISIS: MANY YOUNG AUSSIES ARE LIVING PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK

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May 30, 2024

Out-of-home student at RMIT University, Bethany Prior, is stuck in an endless cycle of work, Uni, and paying weekly rent for her two-bedroom home in Spotswood.

This comes in light of the Melbourne housing crisis, with thousands of citizens struggling to find an affordable place to live.

Social media is filled with posts of tens of people lining up at rental inspections across the city, competing for the same property.

This is no exception to Miss Prior who was recently given a rent increase and is hoping to find a more affordable home in Melbourne's north.

"Finding a new place is a headache," she said, "there are not many properties in Melbourne that students can afford and that is even if you can get a leg in."

Bethany is working two minimum-paying jobs at McDonalds and Chemist Warehouse, all while being a full-time law student.

She said, "I can barely afford three meals a day with wage that I am receiving, there is no way I am able to compete with dozens of people for a one-bedroom apartment that is two times beyond my pay limit."

When questioned if she would consider getting a higher-paying job, Bethany replied, "how can I? I am a twenty-year old full-time student who can only work so many hours a week."

"Workplaces are looking for full-time employees or younger people who are on a lower wage, every place that I have applied to also seems to be broke and don't have the money to pay people my age," she said.

"That's why I have to settle for low-paying fast food or retail employment."

Melbourne is the second-most competitive job market in Australia, coming at number 26 globally.

"It's impossible to find a good job at my age," Bethany said, "every day I stress about my future, where I'll live and how the hell I am going to be able to pay off my hecs debt from studying law."

Like Bethany, twenty-nine-year-old immigrant, Sakshi Pokhriyal, struggles to make ends meet.

Working at Officeworks, Sakshi says she has “no hope” of moving out of her one-bedroom accommodation in Carlton North to a more spacious apartment.

“I earn \$1500 fortnightly and my rent per month is \$1550,” she said, “as a twenty-nine-year-old full time, minimum wage employee, I struggle to save money as rent is my biggest issue.”

Many Australians are also finding it hard to maintain a balanced diet, with food pricing haven risen 7.5 per cent in the last year.

“I find ordering takeout or fast food is cheaper than purchasing groceries and making a home cooked meal,” Sakshi said, “I feel like shit after ordering food and noticed a decline in my health, but it’s the only way for me to survive.”

When asked why she wants to move from her apartment in Carlton she said, “It’s not just that I feel suffocated by the size of my apartment, I also feel unsafe.”

“Break ins are pretty common in the area I live in,” she said, “although we have security on each floor of the building, we are still advised to keep our apartments locked 24/7, and we are responsible for our own safety.”

Sakshi also finds it difficult to find a more secure job.

“It’s harder to find a stable job in Melbourne,” she said, “the only reason I’ve been with Officeworks for over two years now is because I think it’s the most stable and consistent job I can currently find on the market.”

She goes on, “Many companies don’t like to hire immigrants as they think the language and cultural barrier will be too hard to deal with, I think that’s complete bullshit.”

A federal Senate committee last year called for urgent action to address the power balance between landlords and tenants, by increasing renters’ rights.

“Renters across the country are having to live in inadequate and unsafe conditions due to the fundamental power imbalance between landlords and tenants,” committee chair Janet Rice told parliament.

The Affordable Housing Strategy 2030 is currently underway to deliver more affordable rental housing in Melbourne.

The City of Melbourne says they will “partner with governments, industry, peak, bodies and the community to increase affordable rental housing.”

“The way we achieve this is more complicated,” they said.

“We need to view affordable housing as essential infrastructure for the community, and we need all levels of government to support the delivery of new affordable housing by raising and investing more money in this essential infrastructure.”

The strategy is set to be successful by 2030.

In the meantime, renters across the country continue to feel pressure around finding affordable and safe housing.

Sources:

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Sakshi Pokhriyal. Phone: 0449 703 567