

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### NEW FARM'S HUMBLE HERO ON A MISSION TO HELP OTHERS

Few people can say they've instigated a change in government policy but New Farm navy veteran Dave George has done just that after an extraordinary journey from homelessness to housing advocate.

Last month, the 54-year-old New Farm resident met Queensland Housing Minister Mick de Brenni and issued an impassioned plea on behalf of homeless veterans.

Whilst sharing his own story of living rough on the streets, Dave highlighted the plight of veterans on disability pensions who were missing out on a bond loan or rental grant due to strict income limits for those services.

Dave's message struck a chord with the Housing Minister, who invited the navy veteran to parliament to witness a historic policy change which expands access to the vital payments and opens the door to affordable rental housing.

"I've been putting forward the argument on behalf of service personnel for a long time now," Dave said.

"If someone can do something to ease the burden for one person, then to me, that's a big thing."

Dave is humble about his role in influencing government policy and says he's just driven by a desire to help others.

"For a long time, I felt as though I was worthless, but then I realised that I do have an ability to help people," Dave said.

Dave served in the Royal Australian Navy as a quarter master gunner but was medically discharged after 10 years due to severe asthma.

A series of life hurdles brought on post-traumatic stress disorder and severe bi-polar depression, and in 2006, Dave spent 18 traumatic months living on park benches in Sydney.

"It started me on a pretty steep spiral," Dave said.

"I felt like I lost control of my life. I was in a pretty dark spot with no one to fall back on."

After community mental health services intervened, Dave eventually returned to family in Brisbane, but his struggle to find a suitable home was far from over.

While living in a crowded social housing community on Brisbane's south-side, Dave once again spiraled into depression and became a hermit.

But Dave's luck finally changed when he heard about leading not-for-profit housing provider BHC, and moved into 405 Bowen Terrace, New Farm, a unique over 55's housing village developed under a partnership between Blue Care and BHC.

"It's a massive turn around for me," Dave said.

"It's a family here. I don't think I've ever been this happy over the last 30 odd years as I am now.

"When BHC first showed me the apartment I thought, 'no this is a mistake, I've got the wrong address.' It's beautiful."

BHC CEO David Cant said Dave was an inspiration, using his own battle with mental illness and homelessness as an incentive to help others.

"Dave tells his story to help people and create change, and as a result, he's brought about a change in housing eligibility for veterans, which is amazing," Mr Cant said.

"He shows bravery and selflessness, and is determined to help people who are suffering find a better life, just like he has."

For Dave, who now walks 10-kilometres a day around New Farm with beloved staffie, Yanni, life is on the up.

"Before you can start to heal a person's mental health issues, you have to give them a purpose," Dave said.

"To be able to have a roof over your head is a good start. You wake up in the morning and you feel safe and you feel secure. You feel human and that's the critical thing."

## **ENDS**

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