

Senior saviours open doors to needy in exchange for housework

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Olympia enjoys living with Rose, 85. Picture: Jay Town Source: News Limited

AN UNORTHODOX answer to Melbourne's housing crisis is seeing low income singles offered rent-free homes with senior citizens, provided they help them with daily chores.

The Homeshare program aims to keep people out of nursing homes and living independently while also easing Melbourne's rental crush.

The Commonwealth and State government-backed pilot scheme, which will be aimed at uni students and low income earners, will see applicants undergo security checks before being matched with a senior or person living with a disability.

They then enter agreements where they receive free rental with a homeowner senior citizen in exchange for 10 hours of household duties a week, such as house cleaning, gardening, shopping, cooking or dog walking.

Now being rolled out by not-for-profit organisations Care Connect and Spectrum in Melbourne's north and west and Uniting Care in the City's south and east, and complementing an established program run by Wesley Mission, the scheme is funded by the governments' Home and Community Care program until 2018.

STORY BY

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The arrangement has worked out swimmingly for Rose (left) and has Olympia. Picture: Jay Town Source: News Limited

With people having to put up \$500,000 and their homes as a bond to get into aged care, Connect Care program manager Jo Jones said Homeshare agreements provided a huge benefit to both parties, including security at night.

“It is about people being able to stay in their home, keep a pet, with their garden and all the things they love — it really is something that is sensational for the older person,” Mr Jones said.

“It can really help both sides because we have a housing crisis, we’ve got accommodation crisis.

“If someone can go in and do homeshare for a few years, work and save for a mortgage or study, it is fantastic.”

Based on international programs, Mr Jones said the average Homeshare match lasts for about six months, however some can continue for years.

For the past 10 months Rose, 85, and Olympia, 49, have lived together in Rosanna through a Care Connection match.

Having returned to Australia after three decades in Greece the arrangement provides stability for Olympia, while for Rose it has kept her out of a nursing home.

“I have a big house and they would not let me live on my own,” Rose said.

“Olympia is such a wonderful carer, and I didn’t want to go into a nursing home. I have all friends living near me and all my belongings here.”

Olympia encouraged others to get involved, adding: “It’s nice taking care of people and I have my time, my room, we get along very well.”

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Originally published as [Home for chores scheme easing housing crush](#)
