

We The People

Program 118

A Prisoner in Her Own Home



As the Gold Coast spreads out ever further, so the residential areas flow westward like a Christmas tide which cannot be stopped. That inundation of the land also floods our lives with many unseen and often unnoticed consequences which adversely affect society. Many new suburbs are densely built with people cheek to jowl where a pin dropped can be heard next door. Narrow streets and small blocks sacrifice peace and tranquility with everything seen and heard by the neighbours. As humanity tries to exist in this ever growing disconnection so our quality of life erodes away with the daily pressure of living. Affordable housing is a noble cause but cheap housing is not and bad town planning starts the ball rolling inexorably downhill in the burbs.

So with all that in mind let's take up the real life case of Sharon Tevet who lives in a relatively new home in Upper Coomera which she bought about 6 years ago. Mrs. Tevet has raised two sons on her own and struggled to give them a good home in the midst of all the challenges life throws up. She is self employed and works long and hard to keep the families wheels turning and to provide a home for herself. Like most, she has a mortgage and bills seem to arrive far too often and when you can least afford them. Sharon Tevet is a good average Australian having a go in suburbia. However she is about to have her life ruined and become a prisoner and victim in her own home. It's the stuff nightmares are made of.

Now enter the Queensland Department of Housing. They buy the property next door which is a large 5 bedroom home relatively new and well presented. The home then becomes a Housing Commission home available for folk who find themselves in trouble and in need. The houses are close together and soon the nearly inevitable problem arises like a great serpent which when aroused strikes at all movement. The family next door lives there at the tax payer's expense and the fighting starts along with screaming and strident noise. Now and then a dog yelps in pain and cars begin arriving at all hours. It is clear there is little social cohesion and it's plain that the family is dysfunctional and in chaos. So Sharon Tevet tries not to over react and to apply some compassionate restraint. It's all in vain though as the problems escalate like a runaway freight train and her life takes on a sense of lunacy. One particular day Mrs Tevet returns from shopping and brings her bags in through the front door as usual, only to be followed by the neighbour who abuses her for no apparent reason. This happens on two occasions and so Sharon Tevet now locks her home up like Boggo Road gaol and literally fears for her life. She becomes nervous and troubled and is abused when entering or leaving her home by the neighbours. The Police are called on numerous occasions and can do little unless they actually witness the offenses. In all there were five or six adults living there along with five children of dubious lineage, according to Mrs Tevet.

The Housing Commission people at Robina are notified and what follows is appalling. Overall the problems continued for 14 months for Sharon Tevet and her family and her life is rendered a miserable discord. The Department of Housing people come and go and apparently start some meaningless series of politically correct, lengthy, inefficient bureaucratic processes to address the situation although there appears no focus or priority for the aggrieved and innocent Sharon Tevet. In fact she was apparently told by them on one occasion she should not have been out the front of her home as it was antagonizing the neighbour..... she was in fact just bringing the groceries in from her car. It was on this occasion she was actually physically assaulted by the neighbour at her own front door. I must admit I was incensed at this and in keeping with my roll at 4CRB wrote to the Department of Housing asking some key questions. Their response is bureaucratically vague and evasive in my view. There are 45 more potential time bomb homes in Upper Coomera where if the same problems arise the same lethargic Department of Housing procedures will ensure the innocent neighbours become the victims sanctioned by the department's inability to act quickly. This sad story is about the Gold Coast today and no doubt the problems will escalate as the Council crams more and more people into smaller areas just like herding cattle into pens. This is a long way from cruise liners and cultural centers but its real and its exposes the formidable heat and stress in Gold Coast society. Finally the tenants have been removed and according to Mrs Tevet the children have been taken away by the department. To add salt to the public wound the trades people are now repairing the damage as the house was badly trashed and needs a lot of tax payer money to restore it. Sharon Tevet wonders who the next tenants will be and fears national ground hog day all over again.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley