

We The People  
Program 305 August 30, 2018  
We the People 305 The Lady with the Lamp



**Good Day to you.** Today I'd like to share a story with you about an unexpected meeting I had with a lady at Tweed Heads. Her name is Faye Lockwood and her life story is sobering while her name gives a surprising clue to her life today. You see Faye means a person who lives near a wharf and Lockwood refers to a closed forest but more on that shortly. Faye is a slight woman of 68 years and originally from the country. She reflects longingly about her family home near the Hawkesbury River and life after her father died where Faye, her mother and brother clung together on their small rural acreage.

In her formative years Faye suffered from epilepsy and was the butt of cruel jokes at school. She's picked fruit at Mildura, spent time as a waitress and bought and sold antiques and collectables at markets to make ends meet. As an insulin dependent diabetic she struggles with health problems and her 68 years have left their mark across her furrowed brow. Some of the age lines are for her daughter who sadly passed away in 2002 but tragically she was not aware and found out by sheer chance. While telling me, her eyes filled with tears of grief which seemed to drain away some of her life as she spoke. I could not possibly understand what it's like to lose a child and not even know of their passing. Faye is a quiet woman who's head bows as she reflects on a challenging and difficult life. It's clear she would have liked a measure of happiness but those moments have been fleeting. All this, yet a ray of hope still flickers like a candle in the wind ever threatening to extinguish. Nonetheless that flickering hope is still there and I marvelled at the sincerity in her heart as she spoke quietly with me.

Faye Lockwood lives close to Twin Towns Resort near Duranbah Beach close to the heart of Tweed Heads. Across from the harbour near a wharf and in a patch of rain forest complete with bush turkey's, is Faye's home. She lives in a section of concrete storm water pipe draped with an old tarp and a make shift entry of wooden pallets. The marginal rain forest blocks her and a hand full of others from public view. Faye has virtually nothing to her name except a few clothes and tortured memories. Her plight is not her fault and the homeless are folk like you and me who have fallen on hard times. She recounts when young boys of around 12 would sneak into her forest camp and pelt her with stones and foul language driven by some innate desire to hurt and humiliate. I asked her if she ever felt in harm's way and her response was that it's mostly men in that area who are homeless and those around her wretched camp treated her well and she would join in there sessions of friendship, such as they were. I found this remarkable and that they treated her like Florence Nightingale, the lady with the lamp. Even in these primitive conditions the hand of friendship still exists tempered by cold sleepless nights. All this yet she still made the men coffee and tidied the camp for them each day while they slept off their drunken stupor.

The Police are of no use and have threatened to bulldoze the forest while Tweed Council show all the indifference typical of careless amateur governance. Tweed Council commences meetings with prayer and pays homage to social justice but deny human rights to the homeless just like Gold Coast Council and I say a pox on both their greedy houses. Tweed's indifference is beneath contempt. I am ashamed to call them fellow Australians and the desperate dignity Faye shows simply reduces the Council's standing into an abyss of moral infamy. I am indebted to John Lee and his dedicated team of the Tweed charity "*You have a friend*" for their heroic efforts every week and hopefully the rescue of Faye Lockwood. John Lee should be on the relevant Tweed Council committee looking into homelessness but he's not, so it's left to people who sleep in beds at night. They would do well to speak with folk at the coal face and not more bureaucrats or politicians. This has opened my eyes to a dreadful mess within our nation and the 3 million Australians who live below the poverty line.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**

# Faye's Place at Tweed Heads and adjacent homeless camps.

Note the back end is the concrete storm water drain.

