

# A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

## —preserving housing in Fitzroy

Anyone who lives in lodgings in Fitzroy will tell you how difficult it is to find reasonable accommodation these days.

Owners who have for years let out rooms to pensioners and single people are gradually realising that their properties could be returning a lot more money. As a result, the elderly people in the area are suddenly finding themselves 'looking for somewhere else to go' because their landlord is going to do the place up and let it as offices or is perhaps selling it at what seems a stupendous price to a speculator or a professional who wants a town house.

Whatever the reason, the result is the same. A group of people, in many cases, on age and invalid pensions, are desperately trying to find new rooms.

The problem is that the demand for rooms is fast reaching the stage where it exceeds the supply. Rents have continued to rise and many are paying from \$13 to \$18 a fortnight for a single room where they share a bathroom and cooking facilities with seven or eight others.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has been concerned about the situation for some time and took the opportunity when it occurred recently to purchase three, double-storey, terrace houses.

The houses belonged to Mrs Du Poula, who had for many years helped the Brotherhood with accommodation for elderly or single people and nearly all her rooms were occupied with referrals from the Brotherhood's Coolibah Centre for pensioners.

Because of this long-standing association, when she decided to retire, she gave the Brotherhood first offer of the three villas. She could have asked a higher price, but was prepared to sell to the Brotherhood at a lower figure in order to ensure that they would be preserved as accommodation for the aged.

As they are just around the corner from the agency, the tenants can get their mid-day meal at the Coolibah Centre if they wish, washing done, a change of clothes or even have a shower



Mrs Olive Skerritt chats to Mrs Olive Windram as she does the dishes in the kitchenette of her new flat.

if necessary. It is also simple to deliver meals from the Centre if anyone is ill. At the same time, the agency has been able to purchase a block of 10 flats and can now provide accommodation for 23 people in the immediate area.

Mrs Millott, the Manageress of the Brotherhood's Coolibah Centre for pensioners, points out that this does not solve many problems. 'I still have 14 urgently in need of accommodation', she says, 'I've had one man's case packed for two months.'

### SPECIAL PROBLEMS

The ground floor flats have been kept for people with special problems such as the invalid pensioner who has multiple sclerosis and uses a wheel-chair to get around and an age pensioner

who has arthritis in both her legs and finds stairs very hard to cope with. She moved out of her previous accommodation, a room on a balcony, when the ceiling fell in and words can't express how delighted she is to have a home of her own at last.

It's a similar story with the other tenants. Most have lived in lodging houses all their lives and appreciate the new security of knowing that the accommodation will be preserved as such and they can still come and go as they please. For those who have moved into the flats, in many cases it is a place of their own for the first time in their lives. They no longer have to share a bathroom with strangers; they don't have to struggle downstairs and out into the backyard to reach a toilet; they have their own refrigerator and stove. As one woman said with feeling 'It's heaven'.



Mrs Thelma Pearce puts some washing through at the Coolibah Centre in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.



These three terrace houses have been purchased by the Brotherhood to preserve as housing for pensioners and single people.