**Can we help the homeless help us?.**

In Western Australia about 20,000 persons have no certainty of where they will sleep tonight.

Can rural shires such as Boyup Brook relax emergency accommodation to enable persons to stay in a caravan or other small housing until they can afford a more conventional home without time constrictions?.

I was on the Shire of Dowerin Housing Committee as the success of the Dowerin Field Days had enabled funds to be directed to low cost housing for 55+ persons. These new homes were separated from neighbours by two car ports. There were two and one bedroom homes. I lived in a brand new one bedroom home for $65 a week, that was 10 years ago. There was room at the rear for a reasonable vegetable garden. The home included a storage room.

There is a shortage of accommodation in many rural towns, making it difficult to house permanent, casual or part-time workers. If they are pensioners, they may not be looking for work but will be likely to boost local businesses when they shop

The ‘tiny house movement’ is just commencing in WA but land needs to be allocated for this purpose.

In Nannup are a number of multiple occupancy properties where several homes are located on one rural property. These were all owner built, established in the 1970’s and some of the original residents are now key persons within the Shire, some having become Shire Councillors. Until this happened, there were not enough children to support a school bus run for the more established farmers.

I have stayed on communes in northern NSW and Queensland where building by-laws were not enforced but low cost owner built homes were not only comfortable but also of unique designs, often utilising recycled materials.

When I attended the Australian of the Year Awards in Canberra in 2004, the NSW Local Hero was a man who had won more than a $mil from Lotto. He bought a new car, updated his home and still had a million$ left. He liaised with the Sydney City Council to allow him to buy an inner city vacant warehouse so that he could provide a ‘roof’ over homeless people. It was not long before he had more than 200 people under his roof. Churches and other groups supported with bedding, clothes and meals. Some people were very regular so he did a counselling course to help people back into the workforce. He developed a network of employment opportunities or training. It was not long before some he had helped came back to help the program.

Cr Adrian Price