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Housing blues

Prolonged wait for Knox home

By Winston Tan

NINE years after first applying, a Bayswater North resident is still in a queue for public housing.

Michelle Neander has been desperately looking for public housing in Knox, wanting to be closer to family and friends.

She pays \$240 a week for a two-bedroom unit but only brings in \$550 a week.

Ms Neander is working two jobs — as a machinist in Bayswater and at a nursing home in Ringwood. She also receives a disability pension.

"I'm lucky I can work. If I couldn't work and I was on a flat pension, I don't know how I'd make ends meet."

Ms Neander, who has a mental health illness and receives a disability pension, has lived in about 20 different places over 20 years, in everything from shared accommodation to the homes of friends.

"It's hard to find somewhere that is not only affordable but also where you can stay as long as you want to."

"To find somewhere would be a massive relief and would assist my condition."

For Ms Neander, every cent counts.

"Sometimes I might treat myself at the fish and chip shop."

"I'll get a couple of potato cakes or dim sims, but never a piece of fish."

Last month, work began on a state and federal government



Anxious wait: Michelle Neander remains in a queue for public housing. **Picture:** Wayne Hawkins

social housing project on the former Ferntree Gully Primary School site.

Ms Neander, nevertheless, remained concerned about being able to access public housing, saying she had met people who remained on the public housing list after applying in 1990.

"The list is getting longer."

"I might have to wait 12 months, I might have to wait 10 years. You don't know where you stand."

Community Housing Limited managing director Steve Bevington said Ms Neander's situation was common. CHL is building the 79-dwelling Ferntree Gully housing development.

For information on the CHL Ferntree Gully project, call 98560041.