

News

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News

## Destitute and desperate amid rich and powerful

- by: Aryana Angel
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**This week a homeless man died in Woollahra, one of Australia's wealthiest suburbs, seeking refuge from the freezing night.**

I remember the battle between another homeless guy who had set up a camp, which replicated an Indian slum, along the millionaire cliff walk just past Bondi Icebergs (where you can spend as much as \$36 on a glass of wine). Eventually the homeless man, and his cardboard box home, was moved on. Likewise the "Bondi nine" lost their battle with the High Court and were evicted from the shanty town out the back of the Bondi Pavilion.

Today only transient homeless pitch up here. These are just some of the destitute who have sought shelter in one of the nation's wealthiest areas right under the noses of the most powerful and rich people in the country.

Woollahra is a suburb where the median house price is \$1.8 million. It's also a suburb filled with chief executive officers. Woollahra has the highest proportion of white collar workers in Sydney with over 91 per cent of residents in office jobs, as apposed to manual labour or blue-collar roles.

Many of the people in the blue-ribbon suburbs flanking Woollahra and Bondi have money and power.

Yet how is it that so many sit idly by? Of course there are local groups, and individuals, doing a lot for the homeless and have-nots in the community. Take Ronni Kahn, founding director of OzHarvest for example.

Wanting to break the cycle of waste, back in 2004 Kahn enlisted sponsors and got a van together to transport food that would otherwise be wasted to those in need. Nearly a decade later she has a fleet of 11 vans delivering more than 13,000 meals a day.

Rabbi Mendel Kastel is another. He's quietly helped homeless and disadvantaged for more than 10 years. Now he's CEO of The Jewish House, in Bondi, which offers crisis accommodation and help for locals in need.

A few years back the Bondi community, and the boys from the Bondi Hotel, paid for the funeral of Norman Andrews, a local homeless man knocked over and killed while crossing Campbell Parade in 1988. When Chapel By The Sea bought a property on Roscoe St, with the help of Waverley Council, it was named The Norman Andrews House set up to help people who live life on the streets. But residents at The Norman Andrews House fall asleep to the rich aroma of ribs from Hurricane's Bar and Grill nearby, a meal they could never afford to buy.

Meanwhile neighbours on Roscoe St secretly wish the bedraggled looking men and women sitting

outside The Norman Andrews House would stop spoiling their almost perfect view. Homelessness exists, in all its ugliness even in Woollahra and Bondi Beach.

The glare is even stronger and shameful against the backdrop of clean beaches and perfect houses. While the 2011 Census found 120 homeless people in the eastern suburbs, Rabbi Kastel says the number living in inappropriate places (on the streets, in a shelter, too many in a house, on a couch or in a car) is more like 10 times that.

We are the Lucky Country. I wonder how come that luck isn't shared a little more?

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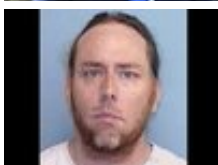
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