

"James"

Ozanam House Resident

LGBTIQ Case Vignette



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James* is a 47 year old man who identifies as part of the LGBTIQ community and is currently at Ozanam House after becoming homeless.

Before residing at Ozanam House, a series of circumstances befell James which significantly changed his mental wellbeing. He'd been diagnosed with depression at age 19, yet the illness' effects were manageable. He was consistently able to work fulltime, and had an active social life.

Redundancy at work, the death of a close family member, and a relationship break-up all occurred in quick succession. This resulted in a strong recurrence of his depression - so much so that he was re-diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder.

About 18 months afterwards, he was the victim of a gay hate crime and was assaulted by six strangers, leaving him permanently physically scarred and diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

When James' housemate became unusually angry and threatening, James called Cohealth which had been of enormous help after his assault. Cohealth immediately suggested that he call Unison's housing. On the phone, after saying he no longer felt safe at home, Unison arranged for him to stay at a motel in the city for the next week. During the daytime, he was able to move his personal effects and furniture from the house without the housemate's interference, and place everything into storage.

Numerous phone calls to Unison proved useful: it was through Unison that James learned of Ozanam House, and also received a lot of advice regarding being in 'the system', and how adjusting to everything. But his immediate objective - to sleep safely behind a locked door - was achieved surprisingly quickly.

Due to Melbourne's COVID lockdown during 2020, the temporary stay in the hotel lasted for four months. For someone suffering trauma and social anxiety, minimal human contact and maximum alone time felt like a vacation for James. However, his fear of human contact consistently counteracts his need for human contact, so in that respect his depression was constant.

The four months' stay ended when he arrived at Ozanam House, where he was faced with many more people than he was accustomed to. Though his career had led to countless encounters with a wide array of people, James at last understood what he'd heard from Unison. There were many people whose circumstances he'd never been aware of before, but the adjustments required weren't too disruptive. What proved more powerful was a strange sense of belonging: though homeless and apparently adrift in life, he felt it was most heartening to be part of a community. When he leaves Ozanam House, James plans to continue to be a part of the house's community by volunteering and giving what he can in return.

James suggests that residents willing to write such a piece as this would be most helpful: new people should especially learn that, even though they are apprehensive and maybe even afraid, they are not alone.

*Name changed