FIVE months ago I published the first of these stories in Seniors Newspaper ‘Talk n thoughts’ section, and I have since noted there is plenty of talk going on with Australian committees, working groups, governments and private interests.

On the other hand some not-for-profit building companies such as Brisbane Housing Company or the Tiny Homes Foundation are flat out with fundraising and building appropriate housing. I have also published a story on Sydney’s Paramatta Council, which is taking a look at alternative housing models through a house sharing initiative.

However, right now demand far outweighs available accommodation, and as the older demographic increases so does the urgency of this issue.

Nevertheless, in a decent society there are always people who, rather than sticking their head in the sand, raise their hand and take solid initiatives in the quest for affordable housing for the older person.

Here, I introduce you to Linda Mina, whose own experience led her to set up an online housing site, and Anglicare North Coast NSW chief executive officer Estelle Graham, leader of a group who has gone to work to raise affordable housing construction funds.

House sharers Gold Coast resident, 68-year-old Linda Mina, set up Facebook groups to help older people find share housing. She said her inspiration for creating the Seniors Share Houses Facebook groups evolved from personal experience. “At 60, due to ill health, I retired. My children had moved out and I was left with a mortgage struggling to make ends meet,” she said.

“I decided the only way to afford any sort of life was to sell my house and rent.”

However, a look at the price of rentals and the realisation that her pension wouldn’t even cover a one-bedroom apartment, meant she had to consider alternative housing styles. “I remembered the share houses from my youth and decided to check Gumtree, I found most were seeking younger people.”

“Luckily, I did eventually find a flatmate of similar age and interests and we became close friends.” Linda’s career background was in community development and with that knowledge she took a further step and created a specific space just for seniors to advertise when seeking or offering share accommodation. “You may wonder ‘why

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

GAIL FORRER
Group editor Seniors Newspapers network

COUNCIL, which is taking a look at alternative housing models through a house sharing initiative.

PRACTICAL WORK: Anglicare North Coast CEO Estelle Graham is behind a business to support affordable housing.
Facebook”, because it might not be considered senior-friendly,” she said. “However, it is free to use, has the capacity to reach many people, and libraries and community groups are now offering courses in the use of social media.”

Linda’s Facebook site Seniors Share Houses Gold Coast has been running for about 18 months and she told me it had helped many find their perfect flatmate (and friend).

“There are currently 550 members and growing,” she said. This month, due to its success, she has developed a similar Sunshine Coast group. In a little over a week Seniors Share Houses Sunshine Coast had grown to 60 members and has several adverts for people seeking and places to share. You can search for and join Seniors Share Houses Gold Coast, Seniors Share Houses Sunshine Coast and Seniors Connect on Facebook.

Anglicare North Coast CEO Estelle Graham said the North Coast area reached from Port Macquarie to the Queensland border and while on the surface this area represented a sunny holiday destination, there was a problem with affordable housing. Ms Graham said high rental costs were exacerbated by increased demand from the influx of road construction workers, and homes, formerly permanent rentals, reassigned to the Airbnb pool. She also pointed to research by Sandy Darab and Yvonne Hartman from the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Southern Cross University, Lismore, and their studies on the housing situation of older women in the Northern Rivers area.

In an article for ProBono (16/11/2016) the researchers said they had found a “massive problem”. They went on to describe the issue as “a sleeping giant”. In an effort to generate affordable housing funds, Ms Graham said in December last year, Anglicare North Coast launched the GR8CLEAN business.

**GR8CLEAN**


GR8CLEAN is a (not for profit) specialist cleaning service for Ballina, Alstonville, Lismore and Byron Bay residents.