

Transcript for the podcast **Coming Home**

Episode 3: The Price of Home

Kate: A warning to listeners. This episode contains references to domestic abuse and violence.

This podcast was made on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and we pay our respect to Elders past and present and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be listening.

Neen: He said, “You are nothing but a blood-sucking parasite.” And I went, “And that just ended the relationship.”

Kiara: Everything seemed right. For me it was actually, I felt like there was hope and the children were happy.

Mary: I actually never met anyone like him. I didn't know there were people like him, out in the world, in Australia.

[Music]

INTRO

Kate: This is *Coming Home*, where we follow the stories of three women, from childhood through young adulthood, to their experiences of homelessness and how they eventually found hope and safety and a place to call home.

Coming Home will show how women's homelessness looks different from men's. We'll examine the systemic drivers that lead to women becoming homeless: the gender inequalities, women's economic disadvantage and family violence, and the profit-driven Australian housing system that can no longer provide enough affordable homes.

[Music]

G'day, and welcome back to this third episode of *Coming Home*. My name's Kate Lawrence. If this is your first time listening, I highly recommend that you go back to episode one and start there. The whole series will make much more sense.

In this episode, Neen faces what she calls 'another fight of her life'. Kiara tells the story of what happened after the end of her first marriage, and Mary falls in love and gives birth to her first child.

Before we get started, let's unpack a bit more this idea of housing as a human right. Back in episode one we talked about our inalienable right to be part of, and use planet Earth as a creature born to the Earth. Following on from this right is the right to safe and habitable

housing. Birds have nests, lions have dens, wombats have burrows and possums find hollows in trees. All creatures establish a place for themselves that they can call home, dependent on their needs and their lifestyle.

Human lifestyles vary a bit, but housing generally involves being out of the weather with space to sleep and cook and toilet, and in our modern era this involves a house or an apartment with electricity, hot and cold running water, a stove and private rooms. A house is such an essential need for a human. It's a foundation for living, including and perhaps particularly for children and their carers, and not something that you ought to have to earn. Indeed children can't earn the right to a house, and for adults without a house, it's impossible for them to earn enough to get one.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of them and their family, and this includes housing. In a society that repeatedly and tragically fails to remember people over profit, and ensure housing is accessible and affordable, we leave women with children literally and figuratively out in the cold.

[Music]

Before we continue Neen's story, here she is in December 2020, feeling right at home, at last. She recorded this on her phone from her secure and comfortable one-bedroom public housing apartment.

Neen: Today, I'll go one with today, uh, I went out, I did some Christmas shopping, so I'm slowly getting into the Christmas cheer.

[Christmas music]

Christmas, believe it or not, was one of my favourite times of the year as a kid. So I always, no matter what, I always try and put on, or do a good Christmas and really enjoy my Christmas, and I'll want my grandkids to have their own good experiences around it all, as well.

So I'm feeling pretty good today. I went, went and bought more plants. I mean (laughs), why not? So, when the weather picks up a little bit, I'm going to put them in pots and, and, uh, hopefully, we'll have some more flowers and things.

[Music]

Kate: As we've heard in previous episodes, Neen had a traumatic childhood growing up in central Victoria. She left school early to earn money for the family, had a couple of boyfriends ,before she met and married her husband.

He was also from a difficult childhood, which Nene naively thought meant he'd understand. He turned out to be abusive and controlling. For Neen and her two children, home was a place that for 32 years perpetuated the cycle of violence.

Here Neen continues the story towards the end of the marriage.

Neen: He was drinking more than usual. He was also, he'd changed jobs, and he was on kind of a casual type thing. Like he might get six weeks of work flat out. And then he might've had two weeks of nothing.

He was drinking every day. He was just nasty, like nastier and everything that came out of his mouth was just nasty.

He would say to me, "I'm going to walk out. Leave you, you'll be left with nothing. You will have nothing, and you will be nothing." And I said, "Don't let the door hit you on the arse on the way out!" (laughs)

I'd gotten to that point where I was done, and years and years and years of being put down, abused, being told one day, "Oh, I should have slept with your sisters. They were much better people than you," and screwing with your mind kind of stuff.

He abused me one night. I can't remember what it was. You know, what exactly had happened. And I said to him, I said, "You know what," I said, "one day you're going to open your mouth, and you are going to say something. And that will be the end of this relationship."

Thirty-two years, I'd dealt with it for, and I said, and I'm telling you now, that time is very close. And he just went, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah," you know. He sort of quietened down a little bit after that. Then about three weeks after that, I was running out of some medication that I needed. Went up to him, I said, "I need to get some money off you for, I need some medication tomorrow."

And he just looked at me and he said, "You are nothing but a blood-sucking parasite", and I went, "And that just ended the relationship. We are done."

My daughter, she heard what I'd said, and she came down, and she said, "Mum," she said, "you can sleep in my bed. I'll sleep on the trundle". And I went to bed that night, and I was, I couldn't sleep.

And I kept thinking, "Gee, you know, like, separate but under the one roof, he could walk in at any time and stab me to death. And you hear about that sort of thing all the time."

[Ominous music and creaking floorboards]

And so that was, it was a very frightening time. I heard him come into the room three times that night. So, the next night, my son had a baseball bat. So, I took that into the room, and I thought, if you're gonna come at me, I'm gonna at least try and defend myself.

Kate: Neen's right to be worried. Here's Beth, the Family Violence outpost worker with Juno, who we heard from in the last episode:

Beth: Leaving is a very high risk, scary, dangerous time for women. So, when women leave a partner, often that's when the perpetrator realises he's losing control. And that that can therefore increase the risk of harm to that woman. Because if a perpetrator feels like he's losing control, he may act quite irrationally and quite dangerously to maintain control.

Neen: The next morning he said, "Oh here's the money for your medication." He was very sheepish. I said, "Thank you." And he goes, "Oh come here, give us a cuddle." I said, "No." I said, "No, there's no cuddles." I said, "We're done." "Oh, I didn't mean what I said." I said, uh, "We're done. I'm done." You know, all that day: "Oh just come and give us a cuddle. I'm sorry." I said, "I've heard 32 years of I'm sorry." I said, "It's just a word. It's just words," I said, "You're not sorry, because two days time you'll do the same thing again, if I let you."

You know, then, then began, came the time, where we sort of spoke to the kids and told them. Then the landlord. We rang him. We'd rented the house for 15 and a half years off him. We'd known for probably 12 months that the house was going to be demolished. So it wasn't like we were kicked out of there because of our issue, but we spoke to him, and he said, "Well, I was about to speak to you." He said, "Um, you'll have to be out of here by June." That was the end of March.

Kate: Neen and her husband moved into this house in 1997 when Neen's son was six, and her daughter was two. It was their family home for 15 years, and after 15 years of memories and regularly paying rent, Neen had no more right to choose her own leaving date, than if she'd been returning a paddleboat on a lake.

It's a contractual approach to tenancy that gives little regard to housing as a fundamental human right and imposes no responsibility on landlords in relation to the intimate and essential need that a home fulfils. With minimal public housing being built, property investment skyrocketing, and home ownership levels plummeting, Australia's private rental sector has been snowballing for the last 20 years.

Here's Dr Raynor from Melbourne University and the academic convener for the Hallmark Research Initiative for Affordable Housing, who we also heard from in the last episode:

Katrina: So the stats say to us that over the last 20 years, we're seeing the amount of renting increasing and the amount of people home-owning decreasing. And that's particularly, particularly obvious for young people, that we're seeing falling homeownership levels generally, but falling-off-a-cliff levels of home ownership for people who were under 25, under 30, under 35.

And we've very much been a country of home owners, which has meant that Australia's tenancy rights have by international standards have been quite low.

Kate: The framework of Australia's property laws, imported from England, were traditionally based on supporting the ruling classes and, therefore, landowners, landlords.

Until relatively recently, the interests of landlords have been well protected by the law, at the expense of tenants. Landlords couldn't be sued in negligence, no matter how dangerous the premises were; they could insert harsh terms into leases; they could discriminate; withhold a bond, increase rent more than once a year.

In 1975 the Australian Inquiry into Poverty wrote that, "The current body of landlord-tenant law in Australia is a scandal." It would take another 24 years, until 1997, the same year Neen and her family moved in, for Victoria to pass new residential tenancy laws.

While the shadows of these draconian, historical laws are still with us, rental laws are beginning to change.

In 2018, and then again in March 2021, new tenancy laws came into effect in Victoria, giving stronger protection and rights to the 1.5 million Victorians living in rental housing, including allowing victims of family violence to apply for a new tenancy agreement to allow women to stay in the home if safe to do so, or to end a lease, and also to challenge eviction notices if they're being evicted because of the actions of a perpetrator, as well as more generally minimum housing safety standards, limiting rent increases and banning rental bidding.

Katrina: And there's small things that other countries would find hilarious that we haven't had, like the right to have a pet in a rental home is relatively new, The right to put hangings on your walls, where reasonable is relatively new. So those things are changing.

I think a lot of the European countries that have much higher proportions of renters, have much higher rental rights, and, this is an anecdote rather than an academic statistic, but, I have a friend who is renting in Berlin and told me that she'd painted one of the walls in her apartment bright red. And I think, the mind boggles. Like I've been a renter for 10 years. I would never dream of doing something like that. It's just like, what?

And so I think a lot of the European countries have really strong controls around rental price increases. There's parts of the US where you can't evict people in winter. They would freeze to death in the streets. And of course, of course, places like Vienna have really large social rental systems that are protecting the right to housing for their populations in a meaningful way.

Kate: The last example given here by Dr Raynor, of Vienna, offers a vision of hope. The city of Vienna in Austria has a huge public housing sector. Around two thirds of the city's population live in public or subsidised housing, paying no more than 25% of their income on rent, and 90% of the population qualifies for social housing.

[Classical music]

There is strong legal protection against evictions and Vienna is the largest property owner in Europe and has repeatedly been voted the most liveable city in Europe. Any change begins by imagining what's possible.

[Music]

Kiara is the third of four girls raised in the Northeastern suburbs of Melbourne, in a traditional Vietnamese family. When Kiara left school, she worked in beauty therapy, expressing her deep artistic calling. She met and married the first man who came along and had three daughters. Her middle daughter has been diagnosed with autism.

Kiara's husband proved to be unsupportive, unfaithful and financially controlling. He manipulated her into signing away her home, that she'd bought before she was married.

And when she found herself, the live-in domestic for her children, her husband and her in-laws, while her husband had an affair, she'd finally had enough, and she left.

Kiara: When I finally then went back to my mum and dad, I felt like a huge failure, I really did. They're better now, but initially, they didn't take the news very well for many years.

Every time I knew that there was family or friends coming over, I would actually take the girls, three girls in my car and drive off to the park, wherever it might be, McDonald's.

[Car driving]

We'd spend the whole day. If we drove back and there's cars still there, I'll take off again, until everyone left, because the fact that mum didn't want people to know that their daughter was separated and come back to live with her, with her three children and one daughter, supposedly with a disability. For mum, it was a shame. I brought shame, embarrassment to the family. That was how they saw it. Dad was a bit more understanding. Yeah, it didn't feel like home anywhere for many years.

So yeah, it wasn't my house. I just felt like a burden to them. I couldn't help feeling a sense of shame, in their eyes. I didn't want them having to justify why I was there. Mum used to say to me, you and the children here two days or two weeks, people won't question it, but if they see more than two months, two years, then they will know.

I know she loved me, but it felt like she was more, at that time to me, I felt like she was more concerned about what other people thought, and it made me then also feel guilty and, and burdensome on my parents.

Kiara: While Australia introduced no-fault divorce in 1975, when marriage is framed as one of a woman's life achievements, rather than simply a potential aspect of everyone's life, often the unspoken expectation is that it's on her to make the marriage work.

[Wedding music]

And it's to her shame if it doesn't. So many women blame themselves, make excuses for men's abusive behaviour and try and try and try again to make it work. Kiara's leaving was an act of

self-respect, that took great strength and courage. Yet, it was labelled shameful, not just for her, but she'd brought shame on her parents too.

Kiara: So then I decided to finally look around for rent and cheap rental places and try to make a loan. I didn't think that I would be accepted or approved but, especially with a child with a disability, but I was approved, and it was a new start.

Kate: This was great news for Kiara, but she also went into debt to do this, and began to experience what is called housing affordability stress.

Here's Dr Raynor again.

Katrina: So housing affordability stress is usually associated with paying more than 30% of your weekly income on housing costs and a really large proportion of lower-income households are paying over 30% and in many places, they're paying over 50% and that's where the stress comes from. It's how much money have you got left over to you know, pay for food, pay for your electricity bills, send your kids to school, when you're paying that much of your income on housing costs.

Kate: Despite the costs, Kiara was settled and excited and had made up her mind that she would live as a single Mum - just her and her children. It was then that she met a man through her daughter's kinder.

Kiara: Initially, he came about to be very, I guess, a gentleman, really kind, caring, affectionate, charismatic. Initially, he was, uh, at the kinder,

I always note he would always hold the door for parents. He was polite. I would always just say hello, thank you, and that was it. There was times where I was struggling with, where she was having a tantrum in the car, didn't want to get out of the car. And he says, "Can I help you?" I'd say, "No, I'm fine, thanks. I can manage.

He would always try to start a conversation. I was very guarded. Even when it was raining,

[Rain]

I was waiting for, to pick up my daughter. It was rainy and he would stand by my window and I was... at times it would make me quite uncomfortable, but I never wanted to be rude, didn't want to offend him. There was times when he asked for my number, I didn't give it to him.

I guess I was still very vulnerable at that stage too, when I met my second partner. And now I guess his perseverance actually led me to, uh, say, "Oh no, okay. It can't hurt, you know, basically, with the children, hang out have a cup of tea or coffee."

And then I saw, maybe there is hope and happiness and new love. Maybe it is possible for a stepfather to love my children like his own.

Kate: Hope springs eternal in humans, and Kiara's hope was simple and clear enough, to share the journey of raising children, to have a partner and to find love, support and companionship.

Kiara: He was initially accepting of my situation, separated with three girls, one with severe autism. He had told me that he's been separated twice and he has a son with Aspergers. He understands what I'm going through. I thought, that he knows the challenges, that he, he understands where I was coming from. I felt like we connected in that way.

Yeah, he was, he warmed up my children's heart, especially my oldest daughter. I really thought you know, this was a chance for second happiness.

Kate: There's a term for what this man was doing to Kiara - love bombing. Here's Beth from Juno again.

Beth: Love bombing is when a perpetrator is overly affectionate, and there's a lot of grand romantic gestures to sort of hook a woman into being with them or feeling connected to them.

It can look like, you know, sending flowers to their workplace every day; a lot of affectionate gestures; a lot of comments; a lot of positive praise; a lot of things like, you know, "You're my soulmate, I'm complete now", that sort of stuff: sort of trap a woman into the relationship.

Kiara: I then had to tell my parents. Oh actually, they didn't find out initially from me. They found out through a friend and then I remember a call from my dad, and he asked me to come over, "I need to talk to you." And asked whether that was true. And uh, Dad was trying to convince me, when I told him that, yes, I did, have met someone, because Mum and Dad weren't even like, yeah, uh, obviously accepting of my separation really, to hear me in another relationship...

I remember him saying, "Your own daughter's father doesn't accept her and her disability. What makes you believe a stepfather will? I don't know what you're thinking. You're so naive and gullible. You believe everything." Obviously in Vietnamese. (laughs)

Dad got so angry and upset, and then, soon after, when I was more than three months pregnant, and then, when my mum and dad found out, Dad actually disowned me. He didn't want to know about this ah, pregnancy, this new marriage, because to me, I guess, everything seemed right.

For me it seemed like there was hope and the children were happy. Initially, they were accepting, and they felt accepted by this person, this man, who was willing to take us all in. But things really changed. I started noticing his possessive behaviour, controlling behaviours even.

I was a bridesmaid for a girlfriend and you know, when I came back from the wedding, basically asking me, you know, did anyone hit on you and everything. And I says, "Oh the photographer tried to give me his number, but I didn't take it." And he lost it completely and

convincing me that I took his number when I said, you know, “I just told you I didn't take his number.”

I saw this side of him, but then I also then, went to justify that oh, I guess if he didn't love me or didn't care, he wouldn't be jealous. And this jealousy kind of like became controlling, excessive, everything I did, wore, how I did my makeup. If I wore a dress on a hot day, that I'm trying to impress the bus driver (laughs), the bus driver that came to collect my daughter for school and drop her off. He would always check my phone.

Even though my parents, they didn't want to know, but I know, I knew that it was hurting my dad. My mum would just say that, come on your dad says that but you know how he is. He says things on the spur of the moment. She's trying to make peace. So Mum and Dad didn't attend the wedding.

Kate: Kiara wanted desperately to make this relationship work, to redeem herself and fulfil her dream of heterosexual family life for herself and her children. It led her to ignore her parents, ignore the warning signs and try even harder to make it work.

Beth: Love bombing falls into the start of the relationship and lures women in, and then the abuse starts and then women can often feel quite indebted to perpetrators. If perpetrators were violent and abusive from the start, the women may never actually enter relationships with that man.

I liken it to grooming, in that men put on a show, put on a front, a side of themselves that they think will attract a woman and keep a woman interested, And then once that woman's comfortable in some way, indebted to them, whether that's they've moved in together; she's quit her job to be with him; she's pregnant. Those sort of constraints are there. She feels like she can't leave and the abuse can escalate.

[Music]

Kate: So far, Mary has told us about growing up in Melbourne in a Turkish family, the eldest of four girls and the tragedy of her sister, closest to her in age, dying of cancer when Mary was 17. We heard about Mary's love of working and the wide range of jobs she had in her early working life, and about her first two serious relationships.

Mary continues her story here, with meeting her third and most significant partner in her life so far.

Mary: I thought I was in love with my first two long-term relationships. I wasn't. And you can't choose who you love, too (cries). It's so weird, you know, you can make every other choice in your life for yourself but you can't choose who you love. And I fell head over heels.

I met him through his sister. We fell in love, or I thought, I was crazy, crazy, crazy in love. And then we had a miscarriage that broke me since the last time I was broken with my sister leaving. (cries)

But he didn't give up. He still wanted to be with me. He still loved me. He still cared, which I didn't understand. I thought, "Why? I mean I've just lost your kid."

Kate: The disappointment of pregnancy loss is significant, but in our culture, when women's value and identity is powerfully tied up in our ability to bear children, there's an added layer.

According to study published in the US Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, around half of all women who have a miscarriage feel guilty and more than one in four feel ashamed. This is despite the fact that a quarter of all pregnancies end in a loss.

In recognition of this significant loss, in March this year, 2021, New Zealand became the first country in the world to provide paid bereavement leave for pregnancy loss, and in September Australia followed suit.

Mary: But he didn't give up after that, which kind of made me love him more, somehow. We kind of got a bit stronger from that, and he got in a way better, somehow. Like he wanted to work. He grew up completely different to my story.

I actually never met anyone like him. I didn't know there were people like him, out in the world, in Australia. They went from foster home to foster home when they were younger and then their mum got them back. Well, he was in and out of jail during his twenties.

I got a job at the State Revenue Office, Victoria, which made his eyes just open wide going, "I don't know anyone that's ever gotten a government job like that."

Yeah, we kept going and then we moved out together pretty quickly. And then it started. He never admitted for that whole first year of our relationship that he had an alcohol problem.

[Bottles clinking]

He would fill up half the fridge with bottles and bottles of beer. Then it went from beer to the whiskey, and then it went from the whiskey to the spirits, and I just thought, "So we're having alcohol for dinner? (laughs) Coz there's nothing else in the fridge."

Out of nowhere, his two mates moved in with us- a guy with his girlfriend. She was only 17. I didn't know that. I thought she was 18. So I started getting lied to. I was like the mum of the house. I'd wash their clothes. I washed our clothes. I'd wash their clothes, I'd wash all the bedsheets. I washed the blankets, towels, everything, everything, everything that needed washing. It was my washing machine, coz I bought it. (laughs) It was my fridge, and I'd fill it up with food, you know. It was my freezer.

My love, my dumb l-word kept me there, coz I wanted to fix it, and I wanted to be with him, and I wanted us to be normal again. I wanted, certain things.

They would be home four hours before I'd be home. I was gone for 12 hours of the day. Dinner was never made by the time I got home at seven or eight. The kitchen was a mess. I lost my absolute mind. I absolutely lost it.

I didn't put food in that fridge for the next week. I packed up my clothes, everything that was mine. And I went back to my mum's house, and then he started calling me, and we'd fight over the phone. Like, "Why'd you leave for?"

I said, "What's wrong with you? Take a good look around if you like the house, the way it is, I'm not coming back. But if you don't, we got a problem because you need to, I need help. I can't do that whole thing by myself."

Kate: The statistics are clear, when women and men start to cohabit, women's housework time goes up while men's goes down, regardless of their work outside the home. According to the last census, on average, women do between five and 14 hours domestic work a week, and men do less than five hours.

[Cleaning sounds]

Mary says is perfectly:

Mary: This is 100% not fair, 100% not fair, 100% not fair.

So, he promised to change and then the guys in the house, like the guy and his girlfriend, they decided to have a meeting and do stuff together. And then that happened for a good month, and then the second month came round.

We fell pregnant again, and he was a changed man. He was wrapped. He was over the moon. He couldn't be more excited. My dad wanted some sort of wedding.

I did not want to get married again. I was so judged when I got divorced the first time, so we had a commitment ceremony. I had the worst pregnancy, I think I could have ever imagined.

Kate: Halfway through her pregnancy, Mary's parents went to Turkey with one of her sisters, and they asked Mary to stay with her younger sister in the family home. While she was there, she kept having these terrible pain attacks in her chest to the point where she couldn't breathe.

[Siren]

Three days in a row her sister called the ambulance, and three days in a row, they told Mary it was heartburn. Finally, a paramedic correctly diagnosed a gallbladder issue, and Mary was rushed in for surgery. The relief was like a breath of fresh air.

Mary's parents came back from Turkey early and Mary stayed at her parents' house for the rest of the pregnancy. Her parents allowed her partner Jimmy to stay there too.

He stopped drinking in the lead up to the birth and so long as he stayed sober, he was welcome there.

Mary: They finally had to break my waters, so induce me early. So they said, "Nuh four kilos, too big. Got to get him out." But he didn't come out. (laughs) He ripped me. He had huge shoulders, apparently. I was overly bleeding, and it was very bad. Could have gone, could have stayed, who knows? He was born 4.1 kilos.

[Baby gurgling]

So gorgeous and ugly-looking at the same time. (laughs)

Beep came to the hospital drunk. I don't know why to this day. I hate him for that decision. I absolutely hated him. He knew I was in hospital two days before, and then he decided to jump on his motorbike and go for a joy ride. It drives me insane. His decisions drive me insane. So I hated that birth. I was diagnosed with 'the blues', as all I like to call them.

And I cried constantly. I'd look at the sun and cry. I look outside and cry. I'd look at my mum when she walked in the door, and I'd start crying, and I would cry every time he went to work.

But yeah, he didn't come home one night, and he came home the next day, and I was inside with my baby. I didn't know he was home. He was outside. And my dad was outside. My mum was outside. I think they started saying, "Where have you been? What are you doing?"

Like, my parents started with that, and then I could hear he doesn't answer back nicely, he's raised his voice straight away, especially if he's already had something to drink. So I put my son down on my bed, and I go and have a look outside, what's going on. And he's yelling at my mum, my mum yelling back at him, my dad's yelling at him. My mum's, she has got some guts. She'll pounce.

And she wasn't just pouncing with her words. She wanted to jump on him and strangle him. They're holding her back. My mum and my dad and my sister and my other sister's holding my partner back. So I, I grabbed him, and I know that with his criminal record, at this point, he could get longer and longer in jail, the more that he more that he breaks the law.

Domestic violence is part of that. He's been in jail before for domestic violence. I didn't think it was as bad as what it actually was, which is what I was told by him, it wasn't that bad. It turns out it was.

So, all I'm thinking is, "Oh no, he's gonna to go to jail again because it's going to hit my mum." I just grabbed him and said, "Go inside, sit down and relax. What is your problem? What are you doing?"

He just said, "Pack up, we're leaving." And like an absolute brick wall, I didn't even question it. I didn't, I'm still crying. I don't know what to do. So I start packing up. I put all of our clothes in luggages, suitcases, put, you know, baby stuff away and everything.

[Baby noises]

And I just load up a car, and I leave with my son and my partner.

[Car starting and music]

Kate: There's no doubt that having a child, particularly the first child, is stressful for both new parents, but there are particular factors relating to women. Mary is in a period psychology calls matrescence, which, like adolescence, is a period of becoming. It's described by Dr Aurelie Athan, a clinical psychologist from Colombia University as:

“Both oppressive and liberating in nature. It's an experience of disorientation and reorientation. There is an acceleration of changes in multiple areas:

- physical - changes in the body and hormonal fluctuations;
- psychological - changes in identity and self-esteem;
- social - a re-evaluation of relationships, there might be gains in social status or loss of professional status;
- and spiritual, existential questioning and re-examining of faith.”

It's a delicate period with considerable mental health risks. According to Beyond Blue, one in six women will develop post-natal depression.

In the middle of this transformation, and with a diagnosis of baby blues, Mary is yanked away from the love and support of her family and isolated in a regional centre over 80km away.

[Music]

Next episode on Coming Home, we continue the stories of Mary, Kiara and Neen as their lives get more complicated, housing gets tighter, and crisis looms.

[Music]

OUTRO

Thanks for listening to Coming Home, a podcast about the impact of Australia's inequitable gender culture and failed housing system, on three strong yet ordinary women.

If this podcast has raised any issues for you, please call 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or see juno.org.au for a list of support services.

This podcast would not have been possible without the willingness of Kiara, Mary and Neen to so generously share their stories. It was time-consuming and not always easy. A deep and heartfelt thanks to each of you.

If you like this podcast, please tell people. Word of mouth is the most common way people learn about podcasts. But liking, reviewing and sharing on social media also helps. Podcasting can be like speaking into the void, so we love hearing from listeners.

This podcast is made by Juno, an intersectional feminist social change organisation run by women for women. Since 2002, Juno has been working with women and non-binary folk in Melbourne's north who are experiencing homelessness or family violence. Juno also advocates to improve systems and structures which contribute to gendered poverty, homelessness and family violence. You can also find out more about Juno via their website www.juno.org.au and follow them on social media.

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This podcast is created with script editing by Juno staff with special thanks to Pai Rittachai. Theme music 'Wanderlust' is written by Scott Buckley, scottbuckley.com.au, and released under a creative commons license.

This podcast is written and produced by me, Kate Lawrence.

[Music]

ENDS