

## Submission to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

Homelessness Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the next National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

Ensuring that women and children in Australia are safe requires action to both prevent violence, and to respond effectively to women who are experiencing violence to support them to escape to safety. This includes providing access to housing that women can afford.

Currently, domestic and family violence is the biggest driver of homelessness for women and children. Fear of homelessness also prevents many women from leaving a violent home.

Research by Equity Economics demonstrates that in 2019-20, 119,200 clients, or 41 per cent of all specialist homelessness service clients, sought assistance while experiencing domestic and family violence, with more than half (55.8%) requiring accommodation services. Of these, almost one in four (24.3%) were not provided with services or referred.<sup>i</sup>

Based on current rates of family and domestic violence, Equity Economics estimates that 7,690 women who come to homelessness service each year having experienced family violence, return to a current violent partner due to a lack of affordable housing options, and 9,120 women and children face homelessness each year after leaving a violent partner.<sup>ii</sup>

In total, Equity Economics estimates that there is an immediate need for 16,810 additional social housing units to ensure that women and children escaping family and domestic violence have somewhere to go and are not forced into returning to a violent partner or homelessness.

To address this need for housing to provide safe options for women, the Federal Government needs to include adequate social housing investment in the National Action Plan.

**Recommendation 1: The Federal Government includes adequate social housing investment in the National Action Plan to deliver an additional 16,810 social housing dwellings for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence per year.**

Homelessness Australia also calls for an immediate injection of funding for 5,000 social housing properties to address unmet need for housing from women fleeing violence and for older women experiencing homelessness. The HomeSafe proposal for an immediate injection of funding is included as an attachment to this submission.

**Recommendation 2: The Federal Government makes an immediate investment to rapidly deliver 5,000 social housing dwellings for women and children fleeing domestic and family violence.**

Providing safe and affordable homes so women can rebuild their lives after an experience of violence is critical for women's safety. In addition to access to homes, women and children



also need increased availability of support, safety planning and legal advice so they can safely leave situations of violence and rebuild their lives.

This will require significant additional investment in homelessness, domestic violence and women's legal services.

**Recommendation 3: The Federal Government increases investment in homelessness, domestic violence and women's legal services to meet the support needs of women and children fleeing violence.**

## References

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<sup>i</sup> AIHW, Table FDV.3: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, 2019–20(a)

<sup>ii</sup> Equity Economics, 2021, '*Nowhere to go: The benefits of providing long-term social housing to women that have experienced domestic and family violence*', p.15