



First nations women worst affected by the housing crisis

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The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait women and girls accessing specialist homelessness services has skyrocketed to a record high in the past five years, according to a new analysis that will be launched at Parliament House today to mark National Homelessness Week.

In March 2023, the number of First Nations women and girls seeking help hit 16,535 per month - up 29 per cent from 12,808 in March 2018, according to the latest data from the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#).

Speaking at an event on Ending First Nations Homelessness in Parliament House on Monday 7 August, First Nations leaders and Homelessness Australia highlight how lack of housing and high rates of homelessness compromise the safety of First Nations women and children's and the broader wellbeing of First Nations families and communities, and identify the solutions needed to end homelessness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar AO, said her 2020 [Wiyi Yani U Thangani \(Women's Voices\) Report](#) revealed that poor quality and overcrowded housing has a profound impact on the safety of women and children, and on all other aspects of women's lives.

"In every engagement for Wiyi Yani U Thangani, housing was at the forefront of women's priorities.

"Women were living with large families in houses with broken doors and windows, holes in the walls and no air conditioning," she said.

"There were many reports of raw sewage and exposed wiring, along with many other hazards.

"It is not hard to understand that these conditions fuel and compound a range of other issues, such as poor physical and mental health issues.



“Women described households with high rates of unemployment, because of a lack of job opportunities, contributing to disengagement, despair and high rates of drug and alcohol use.

“This toxic mix could frequently lead to violence against women and children, and time again we heard there was nowhere to escape to. We also heard how this causes children to roam streets in groups at night to stay away from unsafe households, or to go in search of food.

“Ultimately women attributed all of these issues to a systems failure, of not investing in housing and not appreciating that housing is a fundamental part of our cultural lives, as well as community, social, economic and regional development.”

Ivan Simon, CEO of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association, said: “The stark reality is that our First Nations women bear a disproportionate burden in the challenge of securing safe and secure housing in this country.

“We must work together to break the cycle of housing insecurity and provide holistic support that ensures the safety and well-being of First Nation women and children.

“We must significantly increase the commitment to funding and resourcing equitable housing solutions, empowering our First Nations communities and taking meaningful steps toward closing the gap once and for all.”

Aboriginal Housing Victoria CEO and Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum Chair Darren Smith said: “Australia must recognise the intrinsic link between safe and secure housing, and the safety of First Nations women and children.

“When women and children have nowhere else to go they have no option but to remain in a violent home,” Mr Smith said.

“We need more housing to provide medium and long-term options for Aboriginal people who experience or use family violence, and we need more supported housing options for people with more complex needs.

“Establishing secure and affordable housing as the basis for breaking cycles of disadvantage and homelessness is an important vision of [Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort: Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home](#).”

Homelessness Australia CEO Kate Colvin said the alarming statistics demonstrate the need for urgent action.



“The data reveals the enormous toll that the housing crisis is taking on First Nations women and children,” she said.

“New resources are urgently needed to deliver both the housing that people need and homelessness services that can meet the unique needs of First Nations communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using homelessness services by gender		
Month	Male	Female
March 2018	7,682	12,808
March 2019	8,273	13,761
March 2020	8,340	13,999
March 2021	9,357	15,476
March 2022	9,270	15,615
March 2023	9,481	16,534
Percentage increase 2018-2023	23%	29%

Ends

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