



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Urgent need to address a surge in family violence-fuelled homelessness**

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A new report reveals a growing crisis of women and children fleeing domestic and family violence into homelessness prompting calls for an urgent funding package to provide pathways to safe housing.

Homelessness Australia's *Homelessness and domestic and family violence: State of Response Report* for International Women's Day analyses Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data to find 45 per cent of women and girls seeking homelessness assistance do so due to family and domestic violence.

It finds that over the last decade:

- the number of women and children sleeping rough or in a car at the end of homelessness support more than doubled, from 1,041 to 2,428
- the number of women and children couch surfing at the end of support more than doubled from 3,465 to 7,214.

And in the past year alone, the number of women and children sleeping rough or in a car after receiving homelessness support increased by 23%.

The report notes that lack of access to safe housing prevents many women from escaping violence and pushes women back to violent homes. The last *Personal Safety Survey* revealed that more than 20,000 women experiencing violence wanted to leave but were unable to because of a lack of money or financial support, and more than 13,000 women said lack of money or having nowhere to go was the reason they returned to violence.<sup>1</sup>

Homelessness Australia proposes the Federal Government deliver a suite of measures to address the problem in the imminent National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, including increasing homelessness support, investing more in Safe at Home programs, increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and delivering more social housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety, Australia, 2016, Table 22.1



Kate Colvin, CEO of Homelessness Australia, said: “Thousands of Australian women are faced with an impossible choice - return to a violent home or confront homelessness. This is not a decision anyone should be forced to make, yet it’s happening more and more.

“Pathways to safe housing are the missing piece in the Government’s response to family violence, but can be addressed in the soon to be released five-year National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

“This International Women’s Day it would be refreshing to see real action to fix a desperate, parlous situation that puts the lives and safety of too many women and girls at risk.

“Australia is a wealthy, sophisticated nation. We can and must do better.”

Jocelyn Bignold OAM, CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women says “Every day we work with women who have suffered trauma in a violent relationship who then suffer more when they become trapped in homelessness. With the right early intervention supports many women would never become homeless and could safely remain in their home.”

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