Submission to the Second Action Plan: National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children

AUGUST 2026

Homelessness Australia

About Homelessness Australia

Homelessness Australia is the national peak body for homelessness in Australia. For more than 40 years, Homelessness Australia has supported the homelessness sector and people without homes. We provide systemic advocacy for the homelessness sector and work with a large network of organisations to provide a unified voice when it comes to preventing and responding to homelessness.

We work to end homelessness by driving evidence-based practice and shifting the systems, attitudes and policies that produce it. Our 700+ members and 5,500+ supporters span every state and territory and every form of homelessness. As the only national peak solely focused on homelessness, we maintain a whole of system view. We connect with frontline services, people with lived experience, jurisdictional peaks and networks, data institutions, researchers, policy and decision makers and the broader community to build shared understanding, momentum for change and aligned action. We also work alongside intersecting systems that are critical to preventing and addressing homelessness.

Acknowledgment of Country

Homelessness Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the culture, dreams, and aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are the true custodians of the land upon which we live and work. We recognise that the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in family violence and homelessness is in part a devastating consequence of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and ongoing experiences of systemic racism. We pay our respects to the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures and recognise their unceded sovereignty.

Contributors

This submission has been prepared by Homelessness Australia. We would like to acknowledge all people with lived and living experience of homelessness and domestic, family and sexual violence, whose leadership has helped create the conditions for the Second Action Plan. Their experiences, alongside their ongoing advocacy to bring family violence into sharper focus within policy discourse, has been integral to shaping this work.

Introduction

Inadequate housing options limit women's and children's ability to leave violent situations and present barriers to accessing help and support.

Homelessness Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the development of the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Responding to domestic and family violence (DFV) to support people to build lives free from violence is core work of the homelessness sector because DFV is the leading cause of homelessness in Australia for women and children.(1)

Currently, too many women and children, and other victim survivors are unable to achieve safety because they cannot access safe, affordable housing. The challenge of accessing housing then creates bottlenecks in refuges and crisis and transitional accommodation, so people seeking to escape a violent situation cannot access any safe accommodation at all. This often leaves victim-survivors with an impossible choice: to remain in an unsafe home, or face homelessness.

Housing is therefore not simply an outcome of a successful response to domestic and family violence – it is a core part of the safety response.

The National Plan to End Violence for Women and Children (the National Plan) articulated the critical importance of access to safe housing for the safety of women and for children, highlighting that a 'shortage of transitional and long-term social and affordable housing means some women and children exiting crisis accommodation are faced with a choice of returning to a violent home or becoming homeless', and that inadequate housing options limit women's and children's ability to access services and recover from violence.(2)

Both the First Action Plan and the recently released Homes for Australia Plan recognise the strong connection between DFV and homelessness. However, while the First Action Plan set out ambitions to improve access to crisis accommodation, long-term housing and sustainable social and private housing options, it did not include the targets or resourcing needed to deliver this outcome. The Second Action Plan is an opportunity to address these gaps and commit governments to ensuring victim-survivors can rapidly access safe, affordable and permanent housing, alongside the specialist support they need to recover and rebuild their lives.

Homelessness Australia has considered the latest data and research, consulted with members, service providers and other peak bodies, and assessed what is known about the barriers to better addressing homelessness among women and children experiencing DFV. This submission is informed by this work.

(1) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (2025) Specialist homelessness services annual report 2024-25'. Table Clients. 22 Main reason for seeking assistance
(2) National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, p. 57.

Recommendations

Recommendation ONE

Increase social housing and crisis and transitional housing to the level needed to address unmet need for access to homes by victim survivors and establish national benchmarks for victim survivor access to housing

Many victim-survivors of family and domestic violence (DFV) are unable to access the safe and affordable housing they need to escape violence and rebuild their lives - forcing them to choose between remaining in an unsafe home or facing homelessness.

Over the past four years, the Government has made progress in delivering social and affordable housing, including long-term housing and crisis and transitional housing specifically targeted to women and children fleeing violence. Each new home makes a life-changing difference to the family that secures it. However, the scale of delivery has not kept pace with need in the context of a worsening housing crisis.

The degree of unmet need is illustrated in the most recent data:

- In 2024-25, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) specialist homelessness data shows that 81,883 people came to homelessness services in need of access to long-term housing.
- Only 4,407 people (3.9 per cent) were provided with a home; over 72 per cent missed out, with services lacking the resources to provide either housing or a referral.

The consequences of this housing shortage are significant. Equity Economics' *Nowhere to Go* report estimated that each year 7,690 women return to perpetrators because they have nowhere affordable to live, while a further 9,120 women become homeless after leaving a violent home because they cannot secure long-term housing.(3) The report identified an immediate need for an additional 16,810 social housing dwellings annually to enable women and children escaping DFV to achieve safety.

The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council has identified that social housing needs to be scaled to 10 per cent of all housing stock to address unmet housing need across the community.(4) Given the significant vulnerability of victim survivors and need for housing to enable safety, there is a strong case to dedicate a proportion of overall social housing stock for victim-survivors of violence.

As new social housing is developed to meet the needs of victim survivors, it needs to be designed using a gender-informed approach and reflect the diverse needs of women and children fleeing violence. This includes providing appropriate security and privacy, a location that is safe distance from perpetrators, and which enables the family to maintain safe connections to schools, employment, family, services and support networks. Poorly located, overcrowded, inaccessible or otherwise unsuitable housing can force families to move repeatedly, return to unsafe environments, or rely on informal and potentially exploitative accommodation.

(3) Equity Economics, 'Nowhere to Go: The Benefits of Providing Long-term Social Housing to Women that have Experienced Domestic and Family Violence', July 2021, p. 15.
(4) The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, State of the Housing System 2025, p. 12.

Recommendation ONE continued

A dedicated proportion of new housing investment should also be directed to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to support culturally safe housing responses for First Nations peoples, who are disproportionately affected by both family and domestic violence and homelessness. This would demonstrate an active commitment to First Peoples right to self-determination, commitment to Priority Reforms 1 and 2 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (5) and the ongoing call from ACCOs for fair and sustainable funding. Such an investment would also reflect the evidence that ACCOs achieve better housing outcomes for First Nations people than non-ACCO services.(6) Funding should support First Nations people to live on Country and remain connected to community, and recognise that First Nations families may include multiple generations living together. Housing therefore needs to be larger and located in areas where First Nations people want to live.

To track progress in delivering the homes needed for enable safety for women, children, and other victim survivors, the Commonwealth should establish national benchmarks for access to crisis, transitional and long-term housing through the Second Action Plan. These benchmarks should include clear expectations for waiting times, housing availability, access to culturally safe and appropriate services, and the level of support required to sustain long-term tenancies. Public reporting against the benchmarks would improve transparency and accountability and provide governments with evidence to target investment where it is most effective. Consistent measurement across jurisdictions would also make it easier to identify gaps and ensure victim-survivors can access safe housing when they need it.

(5) Priority Reform 1 is on Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making. Priority Reform 2 is on the Community Controlled Sector. https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/priority-reforms
(6) Victorian Government, National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/victorian-government-aboriginal-affairs-report-2025/national-agreement-closing-gap-priority-reforms

Recommendation TWO

Increase the adequacy and access to income support and crisis payments

Financial insecurity is another significant barrier to leaving DFV and securing safe, stable housing. As Anne Summers has documented in *The Choice: Violence or Poverty*, inadequate income support can leave women facing an impossible choice between violence and poverty, undermining the objective of enabling women and children to leave violence and rebuild their lives safely.

Current income support payments are too low to enable many women to afford housing in the private rental market while meeting other essential costs. This is a major impediment to victim-survivors leaving violence.

Increasing income support payment to at least $82 per day would reduce financial pressure, strengthen prevention and early intervention, and give victim-survivors greater capacity to make decisions about their safety, housing and future. No person leaving violence should be forced to choose between returning to an abusive relationship and experiencing homelessness because their income is too low to find a safe place to live.

The Albanese Labor Government could also improve victim survivors' financial security by strengthening the Leaving Violence and Crisis Payments programs.

Expand the Leaving Violence Program

Expand access: The Leaving Violence Program (LVP), building on the Escaping Violence trial, has assisted tens of thousands of victim-survivors across Australia to leave violent relationships and begin recovery. The successful program recognises the financial barriers to leaving intimate partner violence and provides practical support to establish a new life. The Commonwealth has the opportunity to build on this success by expanding eligibility to people experiencing other forms of DFV, including people fleeing elder abuse, and people escaping violence by parents, adult children, siblings or other people in their home, including unaccompanied children under 18.

The current exclusion of people fleeing violent situations that are not intimate partner violence is trapping people in violent situations who face the same financial challenges that those faced by people fleeing intimate partner violence.

Children fleeing violence are particularly disadvantaged as they are likely to have no form of income support at all to access essentials, such as food, transport, accommodation, phone credit, etc.(7) This places children fleeing violence in extremely vulnerable circumstances and makes them vulnerable to exploitation.

(7) Letter to former Minister, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP from ANZCCGA, https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Uploads/ANZCCG/ANZCCG-letter-to-Minister-Rishworth-Leaving-violence-payment-24-May-2024.pdf

Recommendation TWO continued

Extend the application window: People leaving or who have recently left violence are often in crisis and may delay applying for the LVP while securing housing, legal assistance, income support, childcare, transport or other essentials required to establish safety and secure support. The short application window particularly disadvantages people with more complex needs, including homelessness risk, disability, caring responsibilities, language barriers or complex safety concerns. Extending the application window from 12 weeks to 6 months from leaving a violent situation would recognise the complexity of DFV and reduce the risk that victim-survivors miss out on support.

The Second Action Plan should also allow victim survivors to access the program earlier in the leaving process. Current eligibility settings are geared towards people leaving in crisis rather than supporting a planned separation. At present, victim-survivors can access the program after they have left violence, if their partner has recently moved, or if they have `a safe plan in place to move soon'. Establishing such a plan requires resources and support that many victim-survivors do not have such as access to housing applications, transport, legal and financial advice and other supports. Earlier access, including to case management, would help victim-survivors establish these supports and leave in a planned and orderly way rather than in crisis. Planned separations can reduce the risk of homelessness and the additional trauma associated with it.

Increase financial support: New research from Anglicare Sydney has shown that the cost of leaving violence has increased significantly in recent years to approximately $7,017(8) and can be up to $18,000, `once legal costs, lost income, housing transitions and household reestablishment costs are taken into account'.(8) The $7,017 estimate is conservative as it only allows $86 per night for seven nights' accommodation and only factors in one day of childcare. Given the challenges of securing a rental property in current market, households are likely to face much higher costs for temporary accommodation.

These increased costs indicate a need to increase the Leaving Violence payment to at least $7,500, increasing annually with CPI, supplemented by an additional payment of at least $500 for low- and no-income applicants.

Strengthen links between Leaving Violence payments and case management to rapidly connect victim-survivors with Centrelink: Many victim-survivors are eligible for Centrelink assistance but may need support to make a new application or adjust payments to reflect their circumstances. LVP case managers should rapidly assist victim-survivors to access the full range of Centrelink benefits available to them. Centrelink should also establish a dedicated team to assess and fast-track LVP applicants so that victim-survivors receive appropriate ongoing financial assistance as quickly as possible.

(8) Anglicare Sydney, `Cost of Leaving Report 2026', p. 6.
(9) Ibid.

Reform the Crisis Payment for extreme circumstances family and domestic violence

The Crisis Payment for extreme circumstances family and domestic violence provides important immediate assistance to people leaving violence and recognises that victim-survivors often need financial support at a critical point of crisis. However, the payment needs to be strengthened in the following ways to provide more effective support to people in crisis and experiencing trauma.

Extend the claim period: The current seven-day claim period fails to recognise the impact trauma can have on victim survivors' ability to seek assistance or understand their entitlements. After fleeing violence, women may be in hiding, taking refuge with family and friends, trying to find somewhere safe to stay, or seeking medical care, delaying them from contacting Centrelink.(10) To better meet the needs of people experiencing trauma, the Crisis Payment claim period should be extended to 21 days.

Change the leaving 'home' requirement to leaving 'place where the person has been living': Victim survivors who do not have a home are not eligible for the crisis payment, even when violence means they have to leave the place where they have been living. This is because the Crisis Payment is only available to people who have either been forced to leave their 'home' or whose partner has left the 'home', and the Social Security Guide defines 'home' as a 'house or other shelter that is the fixed residence the person would have lived in for the foreseeable future', including 'a house, apartment, on-site caravan, long-term boarding house or moored boat' but not a 'refuge, overnight hostel, squat or other temporary accommodation.'(11) This means that people who experience DFV while they are homeless miss out on this vital form of support that is available to less disadvantaged victim survivors.(12)

Introduce a 12-month Safety Supplement

A 12-month Safety Supplement for all DFV victim survivors who are eligible for income support would help women on the lowest incomes establish safety and recover from DFV. As stated above, financial insecurity forces many women to choose between homelessness and returning to abusive situations.(13) Homelessness Australia supports the proposal of Single Mother Families Australia (SMFA) of a $23,000 supplement, payable in instalments over 12 months, to reduce the need for low-income victim survivors to return to abusive situations.

Research conducted by Swinburne University found that of 3,600 single parents, 69 per cent had experienced intimate partner violence and 78 per cent spent 'a lot' or 'almost all' of their time worrying about, planning for, or ensuring their family's financial wellbeing.(14) A supplement would also allow victim survivors breathing space to recover from violence and select their own support services. It would also allow for increased security and predictability of income while victim survivors work through the complexity of separating from violence and re-establishing their lives.

Homelessness Australia further supports all other reforms to working-age payments to support victim-survivors to escape family and domestic violence recommended by the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee 2025 Report.

(10) Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee 2025 Report, PDF version, page 78.
(11) Social Security Guide,'3.7.4.20 Qualification for CrP – extreme circumstances (domestic & family violence) forcing departure from home'.
(12) Economic Justice Australia, 'Poverty or Safety – Legislative Brief 2024'
13) Anne Summers, The Choice: Violence or Poverty, 22, Equity Economics,'Nowhere to Go: The Benefits of Providing Long-term Social Housing to Women that have Experienced Domestic & Family Violence', July 2021, Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee Report 2025.
(14) Kay Cook, Adrienne Byrt and Terese Edwards, 'Respect, reform and recovery: Alleviating the unrelenting demands placed on single mothers', 2025,

Recommendation THREE

Fund ongoing specialist support for people with complex needs

Navigating a pathway to safety is made more difficult where people lack the financial means to escape, and where people experience other disadvantages, such as disability, racism, poverty and mental ill health.

The National Plan recognises the additional challenges faced by people with intersecting disadvantage including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and commits to frontline services that are coordinated, integrated and appropriately resourced to support all victim-survivors, including those with complex needs.

The First Action Plan began to translate this recognition into practice with some states including activities to provide more intensive and coordinated case management for victim-survivors with complex needs. In NSW, the expansion of Safer Pathway provides case management for up to six months for victim-survivors with more complex needs, while Victoria has committed ongoing funding for specialist support for women with complex needs. These initiatives demonstrate the value of moving beyond short-term crisis responses towards more intensive and coordinated support.

However, these more intensive programs are not available for all victim-survivors requiring this support, either in the states with these specialist programs, or in other jurisdictions. And for people with enduring trauma or complexity it is often the case that six months of support is not enough. DFV can have profound and enduring impacts on a person's physical health, mental health, cognitive functioning and capacity to navigate complex systems. Many victim survivors experience violence that results in acquired brain injury because of repeated head trauma and strangulation. DFV can also exacerbate existing mental illness, or result in victim-survivors using alcohol or other drugs to manage the effects of trauma.

These impacts can affect a person's capacity to manage a tenancy, maintain appointments, engage with services, manage finances, respond to correspondence and advocate for themselves. In these circumstances, securing a home is only the beginning: ongoing specialist support may be essential to sustaining that home.

Aboriginal women are particularly likely to experience the intersecting circumstances that can create these complex and ongoing support needs. In 2024–25, approximately 82,900 First Nations people received assistance from specialist homelessness services, with 25 per cent citing family violence as their main reason for seeking assistance and 28 per cent requesting assistance for family violence.(15) The rate of First Nations people receiving specialist homelessness services following family violence was more than twice as high as the rate for the population as a whole.

There is also evidence of a particularly strong intersection between family violence, acquired brain injury and Aboriginal women, with Aboriginal women experiencing head injury due to assault at rates 69 times higher, than non-Aboriginal women. (16) Research on the intersection of DFV and acquired brain injury has also found Aboriginal women to be disproportionately represented among women experiencing these injuries. This is highly significant for housing responses: acquired brain injury can affect memory, cognition, communication, emotional regulation and executive functioning, all of which can affect a person's ability to establish and sustain a tenancy.

(15) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (8) Anglicare Sydney, `Cost of Leaving Report 2026', p. 6.

Recommendation THREE continued

The Second Action Plan should build on the National Plan's recognition of complex and intersecting needs by ensuring specialist support does not end when a victim-survivor moves from crisis accommodation into long-term housing. The Commonwealth should provide sustained funding for specialist, trauma-informed and culturally safe support for victim-survivors with complex needs, including support that can continue for as long as required to maintain safe and stable housing. Support should be available through both specialist homelessness and family violence services and delivered in partnership with ACCOs and health, disability, mental health and alcohol and other drug services. For Aboriginal women, support should be Aboriginal-led wherever possible and grounded in cultural safety and connection to family, community and Country.

The Second Action Plan should ensure that victim survivors with distinct and intersecting barriers to recovery are provided the longer-term support required to recover from violence and sustain a safe home. It is important for the system to reflect that the more trauma and disadvantage that women and children have experienced, the more important ongoing support is to their recovery journey. If we want people to move from crisis to stability, and from stability to safety, then our systems need to reflect the full reality of what that journey requires.

Homelessness Australia recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- establish a dedicated funding stream for ongoing specialist support for victim-survivors with complex and intersecting needs who require assistance to establish and maintain long-term housing;
- ensure funding models allow support to continue beyond short-term case management periods where a victim-survivor has an ongoing functional need;
- fund specialist homelessness and family violence services to provide tenancy sustainment support in partnership with mental health, disability, alcohol and other drug, health and other relevant services, with the ability to scale up and down according to the victim survivor's needs; and
- prioritise Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide culturally safe, Aboriginal-led housing and recovery support for Aboriginal women and children experiencing family and domestic violence.

(16) ANROWS, ANROWS, Navigating a pathway to safety is made more difficult where people lack the financial means to escape, and where people experience other disadvantages, such as disability, racism, poverty and mental ill health.

Recommendation FOUR

Support women and children to stay safe in their homes

Meaningful early intervention in DFV can prevent homelessness before crisis occurs. The National Plan acknowledged that while more housing is needed for women and children escaping DFV, it is also 'critical to implement and expand programs that support women and children to remain safely in their own homes if that is their wish,' and acknowledged that retaining connections to Country and community 'must be part of a holistic response.'(17)

Programs supporting women and children to remain safely in their homes currently vary across jurisdictions, with most providing physical security measures, such as security and alarm systems, together with limited case management. While these measures are important, a stronger response should support earlier intervention and address the needs of the whole family.

Safe at Home is a trial homelessness prevention program that supports women and children to remain safely in their homes, rather than entering crisis accommodation as a result of leaving family violence. The program is based in the Geelong and Barwon areas, and run by McAuley Community Services for Women in partnership with Meli, a local service provider, and community legal providers, Barwon Community Legal Service and Westjustice.

Key features of the program include:

- two years of support, in recognition that leaving an abusive relationship is a long process rather than a single event
- legal advice and financial support to assist women to disentangle themselves from perpetrators and gain financial independence
- whole-of-household coordinated support that addresses the needs of women, children and the person using violence
- specialised responses for children and young people with age-appropriate interventions
- non-adversarial support for people who use violence including re-housing support, assistance to help them understand their legal obligations, change their behaviour and plan things like childcare, and
- practical interventions such as home modifications, safety planning and practical assistance.

Though the trial is not yet complete, it is showing early positive impacts. Participants have reported that the extended time period of two years allows them to make changes at their own pace.

Building on these early results, the Second Action Plan should include Commonwealth funding for similar trials across all Australian jurisdictions. Programs should be funded for two years of support rather than the current short-term, approximately 13-week case management model. This would allow early intervention to proceed at the pace of the victim-survivor. Trials should also include adequate funding for legal assistance, financial counselling, children's supports, housing—including emergency accommodation for people using violence where required—and work with perpetrators where appropriate and where they are willing.

(17) National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, p. 59.

Recommendation FIVE

Recognise the role of the Specialist Homelessness Services workforce in responding to DFV and support them accordingly

The Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) workforce is at the forefront of responding to family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) in Australia. One in two women and girls accessing homelessness services, and 40 per cent of all clients have experienced family and domestic violence.(18) As a result, specialist homelessness workers are often among the first professionals to support victim-survivors seeking safety, housing and recovery.

However, the homelessness service system is under significant pressure. Demand for assistance continues to exceed available resources, leaving many victim-survivors unable to access the support they need.

In 2024-25, 91,611 people sought assistance from homelessness services but were unable to receive any support at all, with women and children accounting for 78 per cent of those who missed out – many of whom would have been fleeing violence.(19) More people were unable to even speak with a worker because services had to close their door or stop answering the phone to be able to respond to people who were already engaged with support.(20)

Inability to access accommodation or support while in crisis increases the risk of ongoing violence, housing insecurity and homelessness for victim survivors. It also puts immense pressure on the homelessness system and the homelessness workforce that was never designed to carry the weight of a broken housing market.

More than 80 per cent of specialist homelessness sector workers are women.(21) As a predominantly female workforce, the sector is also relatively low paid. The Australian Services Union has consistently highlighted the longstanding problem of community services workers being paid less than workers undertaking work of comparable skill, responsibility and complexity in other sectors. This is particularly concerning in homelessness services, where workers carry significant responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness and DFV while also managing vicarious trauma and high workloads.

Many workers are exposed to significant levels of vicarious trauma through their daily work supporting victim-survivors of violence, often while confronting the distressing reality that services lack the capacity to assist everyone seeking help.(22) These pressures are particularly acute in a predominantly female workforce that is comparatively low paid despite the complexity and importance of its work.

(18) AIHW, SHS Annual Report 2024-25, Table FDV.1: Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by age and sex, 2024–25
(19) AIHW, SHS Annual Report 2024-25, Table UNASSISTED.2: Unassisted requests, by age and sex, and by state and territory, 2024–25
(20) Impact Economics, Call Unanswered: Unmet demand for specialist homelessness services, November 2024
(21) Data based on Victorian research, but likely to be representative nationally. See WIDI SHS Workforce Analysis Report, 2024, Navigating a pathway to safety is made more difficult where people lack the financial means to escape, and where people experience other disadvantages, such as disability, racism, poverty and mental ill health.
(22) Deb Batterham, Emma Barnes, Chris Hartley, Kathleen Flanagan, Piret Veeroja, Catherine Robinson, Jessica Mackelprang, 'Workplace trauma on the social housing and homelessness frontline', Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, 2026.

Recommendation FIVE continued

Consequently, there are alarmingly high rate of turnover among specialist homelessness workers, ranging from 16 per cent to 20 per cent per annum across all job roles, and reaching 26 per cent in key SHS occupations in 2022.(23)

The National Plan recognises that the housing crisis affects not only victim-survivors but also the capacity to attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce, particularly in regional, rural and remote communities where housing costs can be prohibitive for a relatively low-paid workforce.(24) Housing affordability, workforce supply and service sustainability therefore need to be reflected in future funding arrangements. Without skilled workers, trauma-informed support, and access to financial, legal and social assistance, victim-survivors are less likely to sustain their housing.

To strengthen Australia's response to family and domestic violence, the Commonwealth Government should continue to invest in the specialist homelessness workforce. This should include funding for training and professional development so workers can provide trauma-informed, risk-informed and culturally safe support; measures to improve workforce attraction and retention; improved remuneration and career pathways; support for workforce wellbeing; and affordable housing where the workforce is needed. A stable, skilled and adequately resourced homelessness workforce is essential to ensuring victim-survivors can access timely and effective support.

(23) Data based on Victorian research, but likely to be representative nationally. See WIDI SHS Workforce Analysis Report, 2024, https://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/WIDI-SHS-Workforce-Analysis-Report-2024.pdf
(24) There are additional challenges and barriers to attracting, developing and retaining skilled and qualified staff in regional, rural and remote communities, including the availability of adequate infrastructure and housing, which need to be reflected in funding models. p.55

Recommendation SIX

Address the particular needs of children and young people experiencing violence

Children and young people experience family and domestic violence at significant rates in Australia, with profound and lasting consequences, including increasing the likelihood of homelessness, disengagement from education, mental illness, self-harm and suicide. DFV is also the leading cause of homelessness for children and young people presenting to homeless services without an accompanying adult, making homelessness services the first response to young people fleeing unsafe home environments.

While many unaccompanied homeless young people have experienced the impact of violence directed primarily towards their mother, many have also been the primary target of violence – experiencing physical, sexual or emotional violence from both mothers and fathers, siblings or other people living in their home. At least 25 per cent of this group are LGBTIQ+. Other children and young people experience violence in intimate partner relationships.

For many young people, leaving violence does not lead directly to safety; instead, they move between refuges, couch surfing, temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, often experiencing further exploitation and victimisation. Many come into contact with acute mental health services and the justice system, but are unable to access the care they need. As young people typically leave violent homes with limited, or no financial resources, they commonly move into living arrangements that expose them to sexual and other forms of exploitation – forming intimate partner connections that result in further experiences of domestic violence.

A growing body of evidence across Australia identifies that young people frequently present to multiple services with overlapping experiences of family violence, homelessness, mental ill-health and social exclusion, yet continue to encounter fragmented responses across service systems.(25)

Suicide is one consequence of these system gaps. Suicide remains the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24 years, while over the past decade 520 unaccompanied children aged 12 to 17 died following contact with homelessness services, with suicide identified as the leading cause of death.(26)

System gaps, including the restrictions on access to income support and the leaving violence and crisis payments detailed above, as well as the lack of access to safe accommodation options or refuge exacerbate the vulnerability of children and young people to these arrangements.

The Second Action Plan can play an important role identifying and addressing the system gaps that prevent children and young people from achieving safety, including:

Providing access to safe youth housing options linked to support

Homelessness Australia is part of the HomeTime campaign advocating for a national pool of 15,000 dedicated youth housing tenancies, linked to funded support to enable young people to achieve safety, recovery and independence. The Commonwealth has made an important start by delivering homes through the Housing Australia Fund – Crisis and Transitional Housing program and by supporting young people's access to community housing via the Youth Housing Supplement.

The Second Action Plan can build on this solid foundation by including a long-term capital funding pipeline for youth housing programs, accompanied by resourcing for specialist, youth-specific support.

(25) Melbourne City Mission, RMIT University and Centre for Innovative Justice Unsafe and Unseen: Spotlighting the needs and experiences of unaccompanied young people seeking shelter
(26) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/children-history-of-shs-support-who-have-died

Providing dedicated youth family violence case management

There are currently very few programs providing safety focussed family violence case management specifically for children and young people. This creates a gap in support for young people, particularly those experiencing high risk family violence.

Melbourne City Mission's (MCM) Amplify program provides an example of a successful program: providing intensive family violence case management over a six-month period to support young people to understand and name their experiences of family violence and assist them to navigate complex systems while planning for their immediate and longer-term safety. The Amplify evaluation found that almost four in five participating young people experienced a measurable reduction in family violence risk, while housing outcomes improved for 62% of participants.

The Second Action plan should scale evidence-based models such as Amplify, while allowing implementation through local community-based organisations and partnerships with ACCOs and specialist youth providers.

Providing children and young people with the financial support they need to achieve safety

Income support for young people fleeing violence needs to be treated as a homelessness prevention measure. Young people cannot establish a safe and sustainable life away from violence if their income is insufficient to pay for housing, food, transport and other basic necessities.

Increasing the Youth Allowance Unreasonable to Live at Home payment to the JobSeeker rate would at least provide comparable income support to that available to adults facing similar circumstances.

Reform is also needed to social security and administrative processes that enable systems abuse by perpetrators, including Centrelink contacting parents when children attempt to access the Unreasonable to Live at Home payment.

Australia has demonstrated that effective youth-specific responses are possible; the Commonwealth's task now is to move from isolated programs to a properly funded national system in which every young person escaping violence can access safe housing, an adequate income and specialist support to build an independent future.

Recommendation SEVEN

Support victim survivors on temporary migration visas

TThe Commonwealth Government should be commended for allowing people on temporary visa to access the Leaving Violence Program. However, many people on temporary migration visas experiencing DFV require more assistance.

Temporary visa holders often face significant barriers to seeking help and finding safety compared to citizens or permanent residents.(27) For many of these women, their health insurance, ability to access finances and status in Australia is entirely dependent on a male partner using violence. Temporary visa holders are not eligible for basic social services such as income support and Medicare.

Consequently, victim survivors on temporary visas are more likely to be forced to 'choose' between remaining in a DFV situation, or leaving and risking homelessness and financial stress.

To address this, Homelessness Australia recommends the Second Action Plan take the advice of the National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence's *Blueprint for Reform*(28), which recommends that victim survivors on temporary visas:

1. Can access protections, services and justice;
2. Are eligible for social security, including Medicare;
3. Can access social and public housing; and
4. Have access to specialist and legal services that, which are are funded sustainably.

(27) Australian Red Cross (2024), Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Family and Domestic Violence Pilot Report of key findings. Accessed: 15 January 2026. https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/publications/temporary-visa-holders-experiencing-family-and-domestic-violence-pilot-october-2024.pdf.
(28) National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence (2022) Blueprint For Reform - Removing barriers to safety for victims/survivors of domestic and DFV who are on temporary visas. Accessed:14 January 2026. https://iarc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Blueprint-for-reform-2022-v071222.pdf.