

29 May 2015

The Honourable Marcia Neave AO  
 Commissioner  
 Royal Commission into Family Violence  
 PO Box 535  
 Flinders Lane VIC 8009

**Copy: The Honourable Martin Foley, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing**  
**The Honourable Fiona Richardson, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence**  
**The Honourable Martin Pakula, Attorney-General**

Dear Commissioner Neave

### **Family violence, homelessness and affordable housing – a joint submission from 129 organisations**

The undersigned organisations join together to call for urgent investment in affordable housing and services in Victoria to address the current links between family violence, housing and homelessness across the State.

Through our work in the housing, homelessness, community, family violence and legal sectors, our organisations know that Victoria's shortage of affordable housing:

1. Deters victims from leaving violent relationships.<sup>1</sup>
2. Pushes victims into homelessness.<sup>2</sup>
3. Can make perpetrators more isolated and increase the risk of repeated or escalated violence.<sup>3</sup>

A suite of solutions is required to break these links between family violence, housing and homelessness in Victoria. We collectively call on the Government to invest in these solutions:

1. Improving **measures to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness** for women who can safely stay in their housing, including strengthened programs such as Safe @ Home responses, the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program, legal representation for women facing eviction, and private rental brokerage schemes. \$13.4 million per year could assist an additional 3800 families.<sup>4</sup>
2. Establishing a **rapid rehousing** program to assist women and children escaping family violence to be quickly rehoused with appropriate supports in place. \$10 million per year could assist over 1000 women and their children.<sup>5</sup>
3. Improving **affordable housing pathways for perpetrators** of family violence to ensure they remain engaged with relevant supports to help prevent the risk of further violence.
4. Developing a **long-term affordable housing strategy** to address the soaring public housing waitlist and increasing unaffordability of private rental for low-income Victorians. An affordable housing growth fund of \$200 million per year could build a minimum of 800 homes.<sup>6</sup>

Addressing Victoria's shortage of affordable housing must be a priority for the Royal Commission into Family Violence and for the Victorian Government.

Yours sincerely

<sup>1</sup> Just three in 100 two-bedroom rental lettings in the December 2014 quarter were affordable to a single parent reliant on Centrelink: Department of Health and Human Services, *Rental Report December Quarter 2014*. On 11–12 April 2015, less than 0.1% of private rental properties in metropolitan Melbourne were affordable and appropriate for a single mother of two children who relies on a parenting pension: Anglicare Australia, *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot* (2015), 88. There are currently 33,933 people on the Victorian public housing waiting list; 9,556 are eligible for 'early housing' due to urgent needs including unsafe housing as a result of family violence: Department of Health and Human Services, *Public Housing Waiting and Transfer List March 2015*.

<sup>2</sup> 99,892 people sought assistance from specialist homelessness services in Victoria 2013–14. 28% of these people cited domestic or family violence as the main reason they needed assistance: 25,104 people in total; 2,892 male; 22,213 female. See Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Specialist Homelessness Services: 2013–2014* (2014), 'Table VIC2.14: Clients, by main reasons for seeking assistance, 2013–14, adjusted for non-response'.

<sup>3</sup> See, eg, Centre for Innovative Justice, *Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view* (2015) 50: The report identifies that availability of housing for men excluded through the intervention order process is a key aspect of engaging with these men to address their issues and prevent further violence from occurring.

<sup>4</sup> \$7.6 million to provide Safe @ Home measures to 1521 households (\$5000 per package); \$3 million to extend the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program to provide approximately 1500 more case management episodes per year; \$1.8 million to provide 500 women at risk of eviction with legal representation and social work support; and \$1 million to double private rental brokerage packages to approximately 600 packages in total.

<sup>5</sup> Approximately \$2.3 million in annual rental subsidies and \$7.3 million in annual support costs could fund assistance to search for suitable properties, incentives for landlords to participate and medium term rental subsidies (of up to six months) to ensure the rent remains affordable. See Council to Homeless Persons, *Pre Budget Submission 2015–16* (2015).

<sup>6</sup> See *Making Social Housing Work: Better homes for low-income Victorians* (2014), a joint paper of seven peak organisations, Community Housing Federation of Victoria, Victorian Council of Social Service, Council to Homeless Persons, Victorian Public Tenants Association, Tenants Union of Victoria, Domestic Violence Victoria, Justice Connect Homeless Law.

*Costings in this submission are indicative only.*

Aboriginal Advancement League	Inner North West Primary Care Partnership	Springvale Monash Legal Service Inc
Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria	Inner South Rooming House Network	St Mary's House of Welcome
Anchor Inc	Jesuit Social Services	StreetSmart Australia
Australian Services Union, Victorian and Tasmanian Branch	Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence Inc	Sunshine/St.Albans Rental Housing Co-operative
Baptcare	Jubilee Housing Inc	Tenants Union of Victoria
Barwon Community Legal Service	Junction Support Services	The Bridge Youth Service
Berry St	Kara House Inc	The Integrated Family Violence Partnership – Southern Melbourne
Bethlehem Community Inc	Kids Under Cover	The Salvation Army Crisis Services Network (Crisis Contact Centre and Family Violence Services)
Catholic Social Services Victoria	Kildonan UnitingCare	The Salvation Army Victoria
Central Highlands Local Area Service Network	Ladder	Travellers Aid Australia
Centre Against Violence	Latitude: Directions for Young People	United Housing Co-operative Ltd
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare	Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre	Uniting Care Lentara
Chris Shields - Architect	Mallee Accommodation and Support Program Inc.	Uniting Care Prahran Mission
City of Port Phillip	Mallee District Aboriginal Services	UnitingCare Ballarat
City of Yarra – Family Services cohealth	Mallee Family Care	Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic)	McAuley Community Services for Women	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
Community Housing Federation of Victoria	Melbourne City Mission	Victorian Council of Social Service
Corpus Christi Community	Mental Health Legal Centre Inc	Victorian Indigenous Statewide Homelessness Network
Greenvale	Merri Community Health Services	Victorian Public Tenants Association
Council to Homeless Persons	Merri Outreach Support Service	VincentCare Victoria
Crossroads Family Violence Service	MI Fellowship	WAYSS Ltd
Disability Discrimination Legal Service	Mind Australia	West Heidelberg Community Legal Service @ Banyule
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria	Moonee Valley Legal Service	Community Health
Doncare Community Services	Mornington Community Contact Inc	Western Suburbs Legal Service
Domestic Violence Victoria emerge, women & children's support network	Mornington Community Information & Support Centre Inc	Westernport Community Support
Equality Rights Alliance	National Affordable Housing Consortium	Whitelion
Family Access Network Inc	Neami National	Whittlesea Community Connections
Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc.	Ngwala Willumbong Cooperative Ltd	WIRE Women's Information
Fitzroy Legal Service	Out Doors Inc	WISHIN
Flat Out	Peninsula Community Legal Centre	Wombat Housing & Support Services
Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre Inc.	Peninsula Support Services	Women with Disabilities Victoria
Footscray Community Legal Centre	Port Phillip Community Group	Women's Health In the North
Gippsland Community Legal Service	Port Phillip Housing Association Ltd	Women's Housing Limited
HomeGround Services	Prahran Malvern Community Public Health Association	Women's Legal Service Victoria
Homeless Law	Australia's Women's Health Special Interest Group	Women's Property Initiatives
Homelessness Australia	Quantum Support Services Inc	Women's Health Loddon Mallee
Hope Street Youth and Family Services	Rotary Club of Melbourne	Women's Health West
Housing for the Aged Action Group	Royal Women's Hospital	WRISC Family Violence Support Service
Housing Justice	Rural Housing Network Limited	Wyndham Legal Service
Human Rights Law Centre	Sacred Heart Mission	Yarra City Council
Infoxchange	Seniors Law	Yarra Community Housing
Inner Melbourne Community Legal	Social Justice and Advocacy Committee of St Vincent de Paul Society Inc	Yarra Drug and Health Forum
	South Port Community Housing Group	YWCA Australia
		YWCA Victoria