

## **Budget misses opportunity to house women**

YWCA National Housing is calling on the Australian Government to address the lack of new capital investment in affordable housing for women in the 2019 Budget.

YWCA Australia's Director - National Housing, Jan Berriman, says that safe, secure and affordable accommodation is a foundation for ending inequality for women.

"A Government who is committed to advancing gender equality will invest in affordable housing initiatives with a gender lens," said Ms Berriman.

"We desperately need dedicated long-term investment to meet the increasing numbers of women who need access to affordable housing options.

"Women experience a different type of homelessness to men, often referred to as 'hidden homelessness.' They seek to solve their housing problems by staying temporarily with friends and family or couch surfing, as well as sleeping in refuges, emergency shelters, hostels, hotels, caravan parks and as their last resort, cars," she said.

There has been a 13.7% rise in homelessness in 2016-17 and a 10% increase in homelessness among women since 2011, with over 49,000 experiencing homelessness on census night.

"YWCA National Housing is particularly concerned about the growing number of older women experiencing homelessness. In 2016, the number of homeless older women in Australia grew 31% to 6,866, up from 5,234 people in 2011," said Ms Berriman.

"No matter the age, family violence is one of the main reasons women leave their homes in Australia. The majority of our tenants, both young and old, have experienced violence at some point in their lives."

Ms Berriman welcomed the Government's previous commitment to invest \$328 million to combat violence against women – but said more funding was required to build or purchase more affordable homes specifically targeted to women.

"Safe and secure emergency accommodation is critical for women and children experiencing family violence. YWCA welcomes the \$78.4 million investment in safe spaces for women and looks forward to working with the Federal and state/territory governments in providing housing options for women and their families," she said.

"However, we also need funding to invest in longer term affordable homes which enable women to rebuild their lives after family violence," she said.

"Having a secure, ongoing place to call home is well-established as good for our health and wellbeing and is a platform for accessing work, education and employment."



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### **About YWCA National Housing**

YWCA National Housing is Australia's only national community housing provider focused on the needs of women, providing access to safe, secure and affordable homes.

YWCA National Housing is a subsidiary company of YWCA Australia, a feminist organisation focused on improving gender equality for women, young women and girls.

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