

MEDIA RELEASE

7 March 2020

Alliance of women's housing providers calling for increased funding for the sector

A new alliance of not-for-profit women's organisations in Victoria is counting on their collective voices to drive increased funding for their sector to meet the housing needs of women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

The new Women's Housing Alliance (WHA), established in 2019, is made up of representatives from YWCA National Housing, Women's Property Initiatives, **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre, Women's Housing Ltd., McAuley Community Services for Women, Women's Health Victoria, Good Samaritan Inn and WISHIN.

Jan Berriman of YWCA National Housing says, "WHA was created because each organisation in the Alliance was experiencing an absolute groundswell of demand for increased housing choices for women. From crisis and refuge housing, to permanent affordable and social housing, it is clear that there is not enough housing stock to meet demand."

WHA's mission is to advocate and address chronic housing shortage for women and children who are escaping family violence and experiencing homelessness in growing rates. This shortage has left many women and children spending far too many nights in unsuitable short-term crisis accommodation.

"We've realised that our organisations can effect greater change working across the full spectrum of women's housing needs by advocating together," says Felicity Rorke of Good Samaritan Inn.

WHA has already met with state government to raise the key issues that they have identified.

- **Women over 55 as the fastest growing cohort experiencing homelessness.** There has been a 10% increase in homelessness among women since 2011. In particular, the number of older women experiencing homelessness grew 31% from 2011-2016.
- **Lack of long-term affordable housing stock, so that women and children can't move on from crisis accommodation.** 90% of all applications to YWCA National Housing in the first six months of 2019 were unsuccessful due to lack of housing stock.
- **Single women have been priced out of the rental market.** A March 2019 Rental Affordability Snapshot showed that there were two affordable private rental properties in Australia at that time, for singles on Newstart.
- **Dependency on unsuitable short-term crisis accommodation to house vulnerable women and children.**

"The key thing to note about the Alliance is that we come with solutions not just problems," says Jeanette Large of Women's Property Initiatives. "We have a long list of recommendations that can help to address this significant gap between demand and supply."



MEDIA RELEASE

Some of these recommendations require a brave government to stand behind landmark legislation to create real social change in the long-term – others require a funding increase to address immediate needs.

“Long-term responses include investment in innovative housing solutions like co-operative housing models, shared equity models, community land trusts and many more,” says Jocelyn Bignold of McAuley Community Services for Women.

“In the medium-term, we need to see a significant increase in community social housing stock that is owned and/or managed by women’s housing organisations. This would need to be a commitment of at least 3000 additional rental properties every year for ten years in order to make up for the compounded lack of historical investment.”

“Until there is sufficient and affordable medium and long-term housing in place for women and children escaping family violence, we will continue to experience bottlenecks in the crisis accommodation system,” says Rita Butera of **safe steps**.

For its next key advocacy move, WHA will be making a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia and hope to secure a meeting with the Committee overseeing the Inquiry.

About the Women’s Housing Alliance

The Women’s Housing Alliance (WHA), established in 2019, is made up of representatives from YWCA National Housing, Women’s Property Initiatives, **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre, Women’s Housing Ltd., McAuley Community Services for Women, Women’s Health Victoria, Good Samaritan Inn and Wishin.

WHA aims to advocate and address chronic housing shortage for women and children who are escaping family violence and experiencing homelessness in growing rates. We have a vision where there are housing solutions which provide timely, safe, accessible and affordable homes for women, children and young people in vulnerable circumstances.

Media Contact

Amanda Chan, Senior Manager – Communications, YWCA Australia

M: 0433 843 643

E: amanda.chan@ywca.org.au

Available for interviews

- Jan Berriman, Director of National Housing and Property Development, YWCA National Housing
- Felicity Rorke, Executive Director, Good Samaritan Inn
- Jeanette Large, Chief Executive Officer, Women’s Property Initiatives
- Jocelyn Bignold, Chief Executive Officer, McAuley Community Services for Women
- Rita Butera, Chief Executive Officer, **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre

