

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face homelessness crisis**

Nearly one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been homeless in the past five years and more than half have gone without meals to afford their rent, shocking new research has revealed.

The study of 1039 regional women on low to moderate incomes<sup>1</sup>, including 61 First Nations women, delivered the first national look at women's access to affordable housing outside Australia's capital cities.

YWCA National Housing and Property Development Director Jan Berriman said the *Women's Housing Needs in Regional Housing* report revealed First Nations women were at significantly greater risk of homelessness than non-Indigenous women.

"The study found 31 per cent of First Nations women reported experiencing homelessness in the past five years, compared with 12 per cent of non-Indigenous women," Ms Berriman said.

"They were also more likely to go without daily essentials with 56 per cent missing meals to pay their rent or mortgage, compared with 28 per cent of non-Indigenous women."

The research also found 15 per cent of First Nations women had lived in their car in the past five years because they could not afford the private rental market, compared with 4 per cent of non-Indigenous women.

In addition, 36 per cent knew at least one other woman who was currently homeless, compared with 19 per cent of non-Indigenous women.

Overall, the report found one in eight women living in regional Australia had been homeless in the past five years, a higher level than previous studies and statistics.

"One quarter of women who had been homeless, either in the past five years or currently, did not share their situation with any family member or friend, reflecting the likelihood of a much higher level of homelessness than previously understood," Ms Berriman said.

"This research reveals the inadequacy of affordable housing stock in Australia and serves as a call to arms for the government and private sector as well as community organisations to come together to create innovative, affordable housing solutions for thousands of women and children across the country."

The research found women in regional NSW most frequently reported experiencing homelessness in the past five years (17 per cent) and women in regional South Australia reported this least (8 per cent). The national average was 12 per cent.

Ms Berriman said the numbers of women experiencing homelessness were expected to increase in the aftermath of bushfires, droughts and pandemics like COVID-19 because housing and jobs would be lost and rates of domestic and family violence were likely to increase.

“Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women in Australia, and in regional areas the impacts are even more severe because social services and supports may be limited and strained to start with,” she said.

Ms Berriman said the research revealed an urgent need to double and diversify affordable regional housing options in regions or face a tsunami of homeless women and children.

“Government, philanthropic, corporate and community organisations need to partner to create and increase the supply of social and affordable housing options whilst funding housing support services across the country.”

This research was partially funded by the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science through the Building Better Regions Fund Community Investments Stream Round 3.

Find the full report here: [www.ywcahousing.org.au/research](http://www.ywcahousing.org.au/research)

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#### **About YWCA National Housing**

YWCA National Housing is the only national women’s housing provider in Australia. We currently provide over 150,000 nights of affordable accommodation to women through our owned and operated properties in Victoria, Queensland and Northern Territory.

YWCA National Housing believe the provision of safe, secure and affordable accommodation is a foundation for empowering women to lead a fulfilled life. We provide and advocate for improved access to safe, secure and affordable housing for low income Australians, particularly women and their children.

#### **About YWCA Australia**

YWCA Australia is a leading intersectional feminist organisation focused on improving gender equality for women, young women and girls. For 140 years, we have challenged the systems, structures and policies that act as barriers to women, especially young women, achieving their full potential.

Our high-impact evidence-based programs and services are inclusive of all women and offer support with housing, homelessness, safety, wellbeing and leadership. We aim to positively impact the lives of more than two million women, young women and girls by the end of 2023.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/research>