

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.¹
2. Pushes victims into homelessness.²
3. Can make perpetrators more isolated and increase the risk of repeated or escalated violence.³

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.⁴
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.⁵
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.⁶

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

¹ 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*.

² 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'.

³ 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.

⁴ \$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.

⁵ 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).

⁶ 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
Aboriginal Family Violence
Prevention and Legal Service
Victoria
Anchor Inc
Australian Services Union,
Victorian and Tasmanian Branch
Baptcare
Barwon Community Legal
Service
Berry St
Bethlehem Community Inc
Catholic Social Services Victoria
Central Highlands Local Area
Service Network
Centre Against Violence
Centre for Excellence in Child
and Family Welfare
Chris Shields - Architect
City of Port Phillip
City of Yarra – Family Services
cohealth
Community Information &
Support Victoria (CISVic)
Community Housing Federation
of Victoria
Corpus Christi Community
Greenvale
Council to Homeless Persons
Crossroads Family Violence
Service
Disability Discrimination Legal
Service
Domestic Violence Resource
Centre Victoria
Doncare Community Services
Domestic Violence Victoria
emerge, women & children's
support network
Equality Rights Alliance
Family Access Network Inc
Federation of Community Legal
Centres (Victoria) Inc.
Fitzroy Legal Service
Flat Out
Flemington & Kensington
Community Legal Centre Inc.
Footscray Community Legal
Centre
Gippsland Community Legal
Service
HomeGround Services
Homeless Law
Homelessness Australia
Hope Street Youth and Family
Services
Housing for the Aged Action
Group
Housing Justice
Human Rights Law Centre
Infoxchange
Inner Melbourne Community
Legal

Inner North West Primary Care
Partnership
Inner South Rooming House
Network
Jesuit Social Services
Jewish Taskforce Against Family
Violence Inc
Jubilee Housing Inc
Junction Support Services
Kara House Inc
Kids Under Cover
Kildonan UnitingCare
Ladder
Latitude: Directions for Young
People
Loddon Campaspe Community
Legal Centre
Mallee Accommodation and
Support Program Inc.
Mallee District Aboriginal
Services
Mallee Family Care
McAuley Community Services for
Women
Melbourne City Mission
Mental Health Legal Centre Inc
Merri Community Health
Services
Merri Outreach Support Service
MI Fellowship
Mind Australia
Moonee Valley Legal Service
Mornington Community Contact
Inc
Mornington Community
Information & Support Centre Inc
National Affordable Housing
Consortium
Neami National
Ngwala Willumbong Cooperative
Ltd
Out Doors Inc
Peninsula Community Legal
Centre
Peninsula Support Services
Port Phillip Community Group
Port Phillip Housing Association
Ltd
Prahran Malvern Community
Public Health Association
Australia's Women's Health
Special Interest Group
Quantum Support Services Inc
Rotary Club of Melbourne
Royal Women's Hospital
Rural Housing Network Limited
Sacred Heart Mission
Seniors Law
Social Justice and Advocacy
Committee of St Vincent de Paul
Society Inc
South Port Community Housing
Group

Springvale Monash Legal
Service Inc
St Mary's House of Welcome
StreetSmart Australia
Sunshine/St.Albans Rental
Housing Co-operative
Tenants Union of Victoria
The Bridge Youth Service
The Integrated Family Violence
Partnership – Southern
Melbourne
The Salvation Army Crisis
Services Network (Crisis Contact
Centre and Family Violence
Services)
The Salvation Army Victoria
Travellers Aid Australia
United Housing Co-operative Ltd
Uniting Care Lentara
Uniting Care Prahran Mission
UnitingCare Ballarat
Victorian Aboriginal Legal
Service
Victorian Alcohol and Drug
Association
Victorian Council of Social
Service
Victorian Indigenous Statewide
Homelessness Network
Victorian Public Tenants
Association
VincentCare Victoria
WAYSS Ltd
West Heidelberg Community
Legal Service @ Banyule
Community Health
Western Suburbs Legal Service
Westernport Community Support
Whitelion
Whittlesea Community
Connections
WIRE Women's Information
WISHIN
Wombat Housing & Support
Services
Women with Disabilities Victoria
Women's Health In the North
Women's Housing Limited
Women's Legal Service Victoria
Women's Property Initiatives
Women's Health Loddon Mallee
Women's Health West
WRISC Family Violence Support
Service
Wyndham Legal Service
Yarra City Council
Yarra Community Housing
Yarra Drug and Health Forum
YWCA Australia
YWCA Victoria