

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

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<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  
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