



Homelessness NSW



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For Immediate Release

No Child Should be Left without a Home

Domestic Violence and Homelessness services have called on the NSW Government to rapidly increase the level of social housing to ensure that women and children escaping domestic and family violence can be safely housed.

Over the past year Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) accounted for over one third of homelessness in NSW with Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) helping over 25,284 women and children escaping violence.^[i] This resulted in thousands of dependent children being placed in short-term temporary accommodation living in daily fear of homelessness. Emma is someone who experienced homelessness as a child. She recalls:

“While many people have fond memories of their 13th birthday and school formals, mine was spent in a highly controlling, fearful, abusive, alcohol-fuelled household. My father was the perpetrator, and by the time I was 15, I had enrolled in my fourth high school and lived in 3 refuges with my mum and sister,” said Emma.ⁱ

“At the age of 20, this had accumulated to five high schools, five women's shelters and two social housing properties across Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. Women's refuges provide immediate, temporary accommodation and safety during a time of chaos and confusion. However it was long term social housing that allowed my mother, sister, and I the strength, confidence and stability to rebuild our lives, to heal.” continued Emma.

The impact that homelessness has on children lasts a lifetime. The experience of Domestic and Family Violence, disrupted education and inadequate housing or inappropriate living conditions have a lasting impact on children's health and wellbeing. Research shows that children who experience homelessness are more likely to experience mental health problems than housed children and are more likely to suffer physical disability, emotional or behavioural problems and have poor academic achievements.

“Every child deserves a good quality, safe and stable home” said Delia Donovan, Interim CEO, Domestic Violence NSW. “Whilst Refuges and temporary crisis accommodation form a critical part of our response to domestic and family violence there additionally needs to be more long-term, safe and sustainable accommodation available to ensure that every child has a good quality, safe and stable home. ”

“The acute lack of social housing in NSW is making this an insurmountable challenge for many women and children escaping domestic and family violence as 99% of private rental accommodation is unaffordable for people on income support.” Continued Donovan.

“With the increasing rates of children and young people homeless in NSW, with many experiencing Domestic and Family violence we need supportive housing models with wrap around support to assist our most vulnerable young people” Without an investment in Australia’s young people we will continue to see those young people falling through the cracks” Said Pam Barker CEO, Yfoundations.

Domestic Violence NSW, Homelessness NSW and Yfoundations, are calling on the NSW Government to introduce measures to make providing social housing for vulnerable families a priority.

Katherine McKernan CEO of Homelessness NSW said “prior to COVID19 we had a homelessness crisis with over 50,000 households on the social housing waiting list. Due to the economic impacts of the pandemic we may see up to 16,000 more people experiencing homelessness in NSW. Investment in social housing would provide much needed safe and long term housing for women and children escaping domestic and family violence and maintain construction jobs. It just makes sense.”

--ENDS--

Homelessness NSW is the peak not-for-profit organisation that works with its members to prevent and reduce homelessness across NSW.

Y Foundations is the peak body organisation representing youth homelessness in NSW.

Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. DVNSW provides a representative and advocacy function for specialist services and the women, families and communities they support. Their mission is to eliminate domestic and family violence through leadership in policy, advocacy, partnerships and the promotion of best practice.

Contact

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If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence help can be found via:

- **1800RESPECT** or 1800 732 732 which offers a national counselling helpline, information and support
- **NSW Domestic Violence Line** 1800 65 64 63 which offers a state-wide counselling helpline, information and support
- **Men's Referral Service** 1300 766 491 for men, or friends and family of men using violence

^[i] <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shs-annual-report-18-19/fact-sheets-by-state-and-territory>
^[ii] name has been changed