



Statement of Priorities

National Housing Infrastructure Fund – Crisis and Transitional Housing

Section 1 - Priority Investment Areas

Homes Victoria has identified the following priority investment areas for crisis and transitional accommodation in Victoria.

Priority	Investment areas for women and children experiencing family violence
Cohorts	<p>Women and children experiencing family violence, including those living in regional, remote and rural Victoria.</p> <p>Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence, including those living in regional, remote and rural Victoria.</p>
First peoples housing	<p>Projects that increase medium-term crisis accommodation options available to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) and support achieving a minimum two dwellings available per ACCO-led refuge.</p> <p>Two new congregate supported housing accommodation options, one in metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria, to support 40 women with children who are escaping family violence to recover their experience of homelessness in a holistic, therapeutic congregate setting.</p>
Housing typologies	<p>Projects that increase medium-term crisis or transitional housing within close proximity to existing mainstream core and cluster refuge facilities (both regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne). Projects that support achieving a minimum two crisis or transitional properties per mainstream refuge are preferred and a minimum five crisis or transitional properties per mainstream refuge in areas with an identified supply gap.</p> <p>Projects that deliver three-bedroom dwellings. Four or 5-bedroom dwellings are supported in Southern Melbourne (and other areas as supported by demand modelling).</p>
Locations (DFFH Service Areas)	<p>Hume Merri-bek, North East Melbourne, Inner Eastern Melbourne, Outer Eastern Melbourne, Brimbank Melton, Western Melbourne, Goulburn, Southern Melbourne.</p> <p>Mainstream core and cluster refuge facilities with an identified supply gap include Bayside Peninsula, Western Melbourne and Southern Melbourne.</p> <p>First peoples housing priorities: North East Melbourne, Outer Gippsland, Mallee, Goulburn, Inner Gippsland, Wimmera South West.</p> <p>Other projects that increase supply in locations as supported by evidence of demand.</p>

	Investment areas for young people experiencing, or at particular risk of, homelessness
Cohorts	Young people leaving care Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people Trans and gender diverse young people
First peoples housing	Projects that increase transitional housing options available to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) and support housing outcomes for young people. In addition, two new youth foyers, one in metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria for up to 40 young people experiencing homelessness.
Housing typologies	Models providing transitional housing for young people should be prioritised over crisis housing models. Projects which propose a small number of units or use dispersed housing supported by a small number of suitably qualified support staff should be prioritised. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village 21 Style projects which use modular studios - core and cluster models where multiple units are co-located in a complex with a central support hub - smaller youth foyer models (up to 20 beds) with no conditionality attached to eligibility. With the exception of Aboriginal-specific youth foyers endorsed by the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum, additional Youth Foyers with more than 20 beds are not supported. Project models should consider how young people will exit transitional housing.
Locations (DFFH Service Areas)	Barwon (Geelong), Southern Melbourne (Dandenong), Loddon (Bendigo), Mornington Peninsula, (Inner Eastern Melbourne) Croydon. First peoples priorities: The Blueprint recommends one youth foyer in Metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria, each housing 40 young people experiencing homelessness. Other projects that increase supply in locations as supported by evidence of demand.

Section 2 - Rationale for Priorities

There is a demonstrated need to expand crisis and transitional housing for priority cohorts.

In 2023-24, Victoria's specialist homelessness services responded to the needs of nearly 102,000 people experiencing or at risk of homelessness (Source: [AIHW Specialist Homelessness Service Annual Report 2023-24](#)). This included approximately:

- 44,000 clients experiencing family violence
- 11,301 young people (aged 15-24) presenting alone to services
- 13,000 clients identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Evidence supporting priorities for women and children experiencing family violence

DFFH areas were identified as priority areas based on analysis of demand, the prevalence of family violence reported by Victoria Police to Family Safety Victoria and the current number of refuges available to provide accommodation to victim survivors.

In 2023-24, Bayside Peninsula, Southern Melbourne and Western Melbourne together accounted for almost one third of Victoria's family violence incidents, recording 11.4 per cent, 10.4 per cent, 9.9 per cent respectively (Source: [Crime Statistics Agency, Family Violence Data Tables](#)). They also ranked in the top five of areas for refuge demand (Source: DFFH internal sources). Hume Merri-bek, Inner Eastern Melbourne, Brimbank Melton, Western Melbourne all rank in the top 10 of areas for refuge demand (Source: DFFH internal sources).

Evidence supporting youth priorities

In 2023-24, around 16 per cent of all homelessness services clients in Victoria were young people aged 15-24 (Source: [AIHW Specialist Homelessness Service Annual Report 2023-24](#)). Young people leaving care are at increased risk of homelessness compared to the general youth population. Dedicated capital stock for young people leaving care would support service providers to keep them housed as they transition to independence.

Trans and gender diverse young people are at higher risk of homelessness than other young people. Currently, DFFH and AIHW collect very limited data on LGBTIQ+ clients which can demonstrate this need. However, a study from 2017 found that 22 per cent of trans and gender diverse young people reported experiencing issues with their accommodation, including experiences of homelessness (Source: [Strauss, P, et al, 2017, Telethon Kids Institute](#)). There are currently very few LGBTIQ+ specific homelessness services in Victoria and sector organisations (including the Council for Homeless Persons and the Victorian Council of Social Service) have identified this as a service gap.

Evidence supporting First Peoples' priorities

Census data shows that Aboriginal Victorians are at greater risk of homelessness, with a homelessness rate of 169 per 10,000 of population compared to 38.5 per 10,000 of population for non-indigenous Victorians. Overall, Aboriginal Victorians are 14 times more likely to be supported by specialist homelessness services. (Source: [AIHW Specialist Homelessness Service Annual Report 2023-24](#)).

Aboriginal people, including young people, are overrepresented in Victoria's homelessness service system and require culturally safe accommodation and support. In 2023-24, 19 per cent of young people presenting alone were Aboriginal (Source: [AIHW Specialist Homelessness Service Annual Report 2023-24](#)).

Medium to long term transitional housing can address barriers experienced by priority cohorts in high need areas

Women and children experiencing family violence priorities

There is opportunity to improve outcomes for women and children experiencing family violence and young people at risk of homelessness by increasing medium to longer term transitional housing options using existing, successful housing models.

The core and cluster model has proven successful in supporting women and children experiencing family violence to reside in separate dwellings and provide a safe environment to recover from violence. While the Victorian Government has invested in 22 new core and cluster refuges, expansion of the model can provide increased, effective support. Demand for refuge and other crisis accommodation for victim survivors often exceeds system capacity and pathways to safe, secure and stable medium to longer term housing are limited. As a result, victim survivors often exit refuge into unstable accommodation or are unable to exit for extended periods of time.

Additional medium-term or transitional housing in areas of high demand will alleviate pressure on the refuge system and provide victim survivors with more sustainable pathways out of refuge. The priority investment areas for women and children experiencing family violence seek to ensure every refuge in Victoria has access to at least 2 medium term crisis or transitional housing properties to support exits from refuge. Additional medium term crisis or transitional housing properties are required in the three metropolitan areas where the gap between refuge supply and expressed demand is most significant (after factoring in the program of core and cluster refuge builds).

Youth priorities

Each year the Victorian Government allocates over \$80 million for youth homelessness services. This includes funding for a youth-specific entry point, 22 youth refuges with two women-only refuges, two refuges for Aboriginal young people and 13 youth foyers located across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Longer-term stays provided by transitional accommodation are more likely to prevent future homelessness among young people, compared to short crisis stays. The increased length of stay allows at-risk young people to stabilise more effectively and build up their independent living skills to transition successfully out of the homelessness service system.

ACCOs are best placed to respond to higher rates of homelessness amongst Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence and Aboriginal young people

The Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) reported that Aboriginal people were reluctant to use mainstream services because those services do not always provide a response that is sensitive to their cultural needs; and that delays in receiving an appropriate response can lead to the opportunity for engagement and intervention being lost. Across the state of Victoria, there are currently five ACCOs that deliver refuge services to Aboriginal victim survivors and a further two ACCO refuges are under construction. Achieving a minimum coverage of two transitional dwellings per ACCO refuge will increase culturally safe supported services available to First peoples families.

Aboriginal young people are overrepresented in Victoria's homelessness service system and require culturally safe accommodation and support. Aboriginal Housing Victoria through the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum delivered the Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific Homelessness System in Victoria (Blueprint). This considers best-practice and evidence-driven approaches to Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness.

The Blueprint confirms priorities for children and young people to include the establishment of two new youth foyers, one located in metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria. Each foyer would house 40 Aboriginal young people experiencing homelessness. The Blueprint also identifies the need for two new congregate supported housing accommodation options, one in metropolitan Melbourne and one in regional Victoria, to support 40 women with children who are escaping family violence to recover their experience of homelessness in a holistic, therapeutic congregate setting.

There is an opportunity for NHIF-CT projects to work with ACCOs to provide housing and support for Aboriginal young people. This would reduce and prevent homelessness for young people, build partnerships between government and ACCOs, and increase ACCOs' capacity to assist their community.

Section 3 – Proposed Jurisdictional Support

Capital contributions

There is no dedicated Victorian Government capital grant funding program matched to the NHIF CT. Community Housing Providers may submit applications to existing Victorian Government capital grant funding programs, such as the Social Housing Growth Fund.

Community Housing Providers may also be eligible to apply for a concessional loan through the Affordable Housing Investment Program for a project submitted through NHIF CT.

Operational Contributions

There is no dedicated Victorian Government operational funding matched to the NHIF CT.

Proposals submitted to the NHIF CT should leverage existing case management and crisis brokerage funding to deliver services to clients. For example, an increased supply of transitional houses would allow specialist family violence services to leverage existing case management and crisis brokerage Victorian Government funding to deliver services to victim survivors and improve pathways out of refuge to support reduced wait times to access refuge placements to support in properties.

Applications are also encouraged to consider targeting operational models that allow Community Housing Providers to receive rental income from clients and/or via Commonwealth Rent Assistance. This may preference medium term housing solutions such as transitional housing models.

For Youth housing, investment in small, transitional housing projects that operate with lower intensity outreach support are more suitable to be funded from existing funded case management programs, compared to crisis accommodation models for Youth.

Land contribution

For any projects proposed on Victorian Government owned land, applicants must seek the written consent of Homes Victoria prior to submission of NHIF CT applications.

Applicants can contact Homes Victoria at NHIFCT@homes.vic.gov.au.

Government commitments

The Victorian Government is redeveloping family violence refuges and building new refuges and family violence crisis accommodation properties to increase capacity with an investment of over \$250 million over 9 years to support this work. Upon completion, the number of refuges across the state will grow from 30 to 35, and the household capacity of the refuge system will increase from 124 to 197 households per night (an increase of 73).

Most but not all refuge agencies operate Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) properties alongside their refuge. These are medium-term crisis / transitional type properties, usually located within close geographic proximity to the refuge. CAP properties form a part of the suite of crisis accommodation options available for victim survivors fleeing violence and are usually owned by Homes Victoria and leased to refuge agencies.

In this way, CAP properties provide additional capacity for refuges to address barriers to exit for victim survivors who require additional support and / or those with enduring barriers for whom it is difficult to find appropriate longer term accommodation. These properties are also useful for victims for whom a communal or core and cluster refuge is not a suitable option.

Since August 2023, family violence services have been operating under the Family Violence Crisis Response Model, which aims to improve the way the family violence system works to support victim survivors in crisis. This model aims to ensure:

- all victim survivors in crisis get immediate support and emergency accommodation, if needed, no matter which specialist family violence service they access
- all victim survivors in emergency accommodation can get face-to-face support from a local family violence support service, wherever they are accommodated and at any time of day or night
- all victim survivors will be supported by, or connected to, a local family violence support service when leaving emergency accommodation.

Outcomes for victim survivors in crisis are better when they are able to access safe, supported and suitable crisis accommodation options. However, demand for refuge and other crisis accommodation for victim survivors exceeds system capacity, with motels being the most likely immediate alternative emergency accommodation option provided.

The Victorian Government continues to explore opportunities to expand the availability of crisis accommodation for victim survivors at highest risk of injury or death and who cannot stay safely in their homes. Examples of some of these newer initiatives include Sanctuary, operated by Safe Steps, and the grant funding to McAuley Community Services for Women and Good Samaritan Inn to deliver additional short – medium term crisis accommodation.

Other forms of support**Regional Housing Fund Rapid Housing Round**

Homes Victoria support co-founding opportunities through the Regional Housing Fund Rapid Housing Round which is focused on addressing people at risk of homelessness in rural and regional Victoria.

Aboriginal Housing engagement and support

Homes Victoria provide an individual/tailored engagement with organisations within the Victorian Aboriginal housing sector that provides agencies with support tailored to their specific needs and circumstances to achieve new housing outcomes for their community. This process would include:

- a. Exploring funding opportunities and partnership structures with Community Housing Providers and Specialist Family Violence and Youth Service Providers that is fit for purpose for organisations to deliver housing investment outcomes. This may include advice on proposal development and feedback and review on submissions before lodgement for evaluation.
- b. Supporting Registration – Providing practical support to Aboriginal housing organisations with the process of becoming a registered housing provider. This includes assisting with clarification with input from the Housing Registrar’s office as well as supporting agencies with obtaining external advice to complete housing policies and other requirements in order to become registered.

Streamlined planning provisions

Streamlined planning provision Clause 52.20 ‘Government Funded Housing Development’ is a planning permit exemption pathway that facilitates the use and development of land for housing projects funded wholly or partly, by the Victorian or Commonwealth Government. This provision removes some planning scheme requirements, formal notification and third-party appeal rights and includes development standards specific to government funded housing, including reduced car parking rates.

Streamlined planning provision Clause 53.20 ‘Housing by or on Behalf of Homes Victoria’ is a planning pathway that facilitates the development of social and affordable housing by or on behalf of Homes Victoria. This provision removes some planning scheme requirements, formal notification and third-party appeal rights and includes development standards specific to social and affordable housing, including reduced car parking rates.

Streamlined planning provision Clause 53.23 ‘Significant Residential Development with Affordable Housing’ is a planning pathway that facilitates residential development that includes affordable housing. There are several ways to qualify to use the provision including cost of development, partnering with the State of Victoria or being funded by a public authority. This provision removes some planning scheme requirements and third-party appeal rights.

Clause 52.22 ‘Community Care Accommodation’ includes planning permit, formal notification and third-party appeal exemptions for community care accommodation if certain requirements are met, including that projects are funded by a government department or public authority. Community care accommodation is defined as:

Land used to provide accommodation and car services. It includes permanent, temporary and emergency accommodation. It may include supervisory staff and support services for residents and visitors.