

FEBRUARY 2024



## Submission

to the Family Violence  
Reform Rolling Action Plan  
consultation.

[chp.org.au](http://chp.org.au)

# Acknowledgement

In the spirit of reconciliation, Council to Homeless Persons acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. Council to Homeless Persons is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

## Family violence and homelessness

In 2021-22, some 45,999 people came to Victorian specialist homelessness services and identified family violence as a factor in their homelessness or risk thereof. It is clear that women and children experiencing family violence regularly require support to obtain or sustain housing. Homelessness is almost always a deeply harmful experience, and for children, it can be especially damaging.

Despite significant efforts to improve accommodation outcomes for women and children experiencing family violence, the response has never been commensurate to the size of the task. Among people seeking assistance while already homeless, some 64 per cent remained homeless at the end of support. In 2015-16 (prior to the implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence's recommendations), a lower proportion, 59 per cent, remained homeless at the end of support.

Several factors are contributing to this outcome. A significant one is the lack of public and community housing in Victoria. A blowout in public housing waiting times has especially impacted women and children leaving family violence.

Whereas the target wait time for a public housing allocation for this group is 10.5 months (already a very long time for women and children to be without a stable home), the average wait time in 2022/23 was 23.6 months. This trend is getting worse, with wait times in 2021/22 averaging 17.1 months.

To support women and children escaping family violence, Victoria must grow its public and community housing stock as a matter of urgent priority. Currently, Victoria's Big Housing Build is beginning to wind down. But the figures above demonstrate that much more must be done.

While public and community housing are an essential tool for some families escaping violence, others would thrive in private rentals, if it weren't for the financial constraints often associated with leaving a violent partner. Programs like Victoria's Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP), initially funded under the Family Violence Housing Blitz have become essential tools in facilitating access to safe homes for people escaping family violence.

However, PRAP is now supporting far more people than it is funded to. This represents both less funding available per household to gain or sustain a home, thus excluding some whose incomes can't stretch to meet the gap, but it also represents a significant capacity constraint on support. More families can be helped, and at a relatively low cost, by greatly expanding this program.

Women and children escaping family violence deserve to live in safe homes. The Victorian Government needs to invest in public and community housing, and supports for people in the private rental market to meet the needs of victim-survivors of violence.