

December 15, 2021

We need to do more to address Australia's housing crisis

CENTRAL Victoria's leading specialist family violence response agency, Centre for Non-Violence, is calling for greater community conversation and leadership at all government levels about the country's housing crisis.

CNV staff are reporting the lack of affordable housing is the most significant barrier for women across the Loddon region leaving abusive relationships.

The Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2020-21, shows 42 per cent of specialist housing services clients had experienced family violence during the past financial year.

Family and domestic violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes, with victim-survivors often left to carry the financial and other burdens for leaving an abusive relationship.

Centre for Non-Violence executive manager of programs and services, Yvette Jaczina, says access to housing right across the Loddon region is scarce, and CNV staff spend significant time trying to find appropriate and affordable accommodation for women and children seeking support to leave abusive relationships.

"Private rental opportunities are scarce, particularly in our regional locations - Kyneton, Maryborough and Echuca," she said.

"Women are making choices to stay with an abusive partner to ensure they can provide housing stability for their children.

"Choices have definitely reduced. This is particularly concerning as we know many of these women are at high risk."

Recent comments from our staff, include:

"Housing is coming through as the main roadblock to women leaving family violence – and when they do leave, they are leaving into homelessness."

"We have a large number of clients coming through with chronic homelessness – it's not going to get better any time soon."

“Housing is a really big issue – it’s another reason why a lot of women aren’t leaving abusive relationships. They fear they’re going to be homeless. We’ve got a number of clients who are homeless, with their children – they would never have imagined they would be in this situation.”

“Housing is a huge pressure – not just a pressure on the women and the system, but on the workers.”

Ms Jaczina said the impact of short-term accommodation and housing instability, particularly on children, impacted on many areas of a person’s life – including schooling, educational outcomes, employment opportunities, family connections and opportunities to rebuild and recover.

In the 20-21 financial year, CNV received \$882,650 in State Government funding for flexible support packages – which is used to provide a range of supports to victim-survivors, including counselling, education, safety, well-being, independence and other practical or material needs.

Of those funds, \$730,000 was used to support women and children to access emergency, stable or secure housing or to secure their homes and obtain personal safety devices.

Centre for Non-Violence chief executive officer, Margaret Augerinos, says ‘this is only the tip of the iceberg’.

“We know many victim-survivors do not report violence or seek support from specialist family violence or homelessness services,” she said.

“More investment is needed in social and community housing to meet both crisis response and long-term recovery and support options for victim-survivors.

“Family violence and the lack of affordable housing have been at crisis point for some time across Australia – and the pressure on the sector increases every day.

“We do not want to be in the position where we turn people away, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the needs of our clients because there is nowhere for them to go.”

Centre for Non-Violence can be contacted on 1800 884 292 | The Orange Door Loddon can be contacted on 1800 512 359 | The 24-hour statewide safe steps family violence crisis response line is 1800 015 188 | Men’s Referral Service 1300 766 491 | In an emergency, call 000 | For information, visit: www.cnv.org.au/we-are-here-to-help

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