

# Family Violence and Homelessness:

A practice exchange forum to improve safety and support for women and children



Presented by:



**WOMEN'S HEALTH  
IN THE NORTH**



# Overview

## Setting the scene

Sarah Johnson, Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator

## Small group discussion

Biggest challenge you face in responding to women and children experiencing homelessness as a result of family violence

## Presentations

NIFVS and Royal Commission into Family Violence

NLASN and Homelessness and Social Housing Reforms (Meredith Gorman)

[BREAK]

## Panel discussion (hypothetical)

Ada Conroy, Family Violence Project Workers and Trainer

## Small group discussion

- Myths/ assumptions
- What can you and/or your service do to minimise the barriers for women and children?
- What could we do together to improve our responses?



# Why are we here?

To strengthen the intersections between family violence and housing/homelessness services to improve the safety of women and children

- A shared history
- NIFVS Housing and Homelessness Working Group
- Reforms
  - Royal Commission into Family Violence
  - Homelessness and Social Housing Reforms

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# What you said

45 managers and workers from the housing/ homelessness and family violence sectors completed a pre-forum survey.

Survey participants from both sectors gave very similar responses:

- There aren't enough resources to respond to demand
- There are myths and assumptions about each sector
- We need to enhance our understanding of each other's sectors
- We need to better understand, and strengthen our shared practice



# What you said

“What barriers do you believe clients experience when engaging with **family violence services**?”

- A history of trauma
- Current chaotic life experience
- Find it difficult to engage without the basic security of housing
- Being homeless and unable to access a family violence service due to having a lack of stability and no fixed address
- Their case may not be assessed as high risk enough to receive a service (due to demand on family violence services)



# What you said

“What barriers do clients experience when engaging with **housing / homelessness services?**”

- Lack of access to safe and affordable accommodation
- Women may choose to stay in abusive relationships due to a lack of accommodation options
- Women may be put off by abrupt Intake Assessment and Planning (IAP) processes, that result from time pressures at intake
- Workers may not identify and/or understand the risk that clients might be experiencing



# What to expect

**Hear** about opportunities and implications from the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Housing and Homelessness Reforms

**Share** your expertise in working in a family violence or housing/homelessness service

**Unpack** myths and assumptions to strengthen relationships across sectors

**Understand** the unique challenges and opportunities of working in each sector



# Activity - throughout the forum

On worksheets: Share advice about the best way to strengthen our response to women and children experiencing homelessness as a result of family violence (white paper)

Stick these to windows and responses will be combined and sent out after the forum.





# Activity one

AT YOUR TABLE:

Discuss the biggest challenge you face in responding to women and children experiencing homelessness as a result of family violence, and how you manage these challenges to ensure safety. (grey paper) (20 mins)

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NORTH & WEST HOMELESSNESS NETWORKS

NWHNS

# **The Northern Homelessness Service System July 2016**

## Definition of homelessness

NWHNs

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Act (1994) identifies that a person is homeless

if she or he has inadequate access to safe and secure housing.... if the only housing to which the person has access:

- a) damages, or is likely to damage, the person's health; or
- b) threatens the person's safety; or
- c) marginalises the person through failing to provide access to:
  - i. adequate personal amenities; or
  - ii. the economic and social supports that a home normally affords; or
  - iii. Places the person in circumstances which threaten or adversely affect the adequacy, safety, security and affordability of that housing.

This definition includes people who are in crisis and/or experiencing family violence and/or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

## What is the role of the HSS?

NWHNs

To provide assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to support them:

- to find or maintain stable long term housing; and
- to address those issues that have contributed to homelessness or homelessness risk to reduce the likelihood of recurring homelessness.

## Homelessness in the north

NWHNs

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:

- 22,000 people were homeless in Victoria on census night 20011: 42 in every 10,000 people.
- A range of government indicators show that 24 - 38% of people who are homeless in Victoria are in the Melbourne's north and west.

## Consumers of the HSS

NWHNs

Of those who present to the HSS:

- Just over half are women
- $\frac{1}{4}$  are under 25
- Just over half are single people
- $\frac{1}{3}$  are accompanied by children
- 6% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders

The primary reasons people access homelessness services are:

- Family violence (30%)
- Eviction (18%)

## More than just housing

NWHNs

- Clients often present with eight to ten (or more) presenting issues.
- Housing is one of those needs but it's the *fundamental need* that everything else hinges on.
- Good outcomes are very much dependent on the case manager's knowledge of and ability to navigate multiple service systems to get a variety of needs met – housing, mental health, primary health, specialist health services, family and parenting services, legal, financial, cultural etc.

## What services are in the HSS?

NWHNs

- 3 generalist, 1 family violence and 1 youth specific access point services
- 3 transitional housing management services, managing 900 properties
- 34 homelessness support agencies providing 120 programs
- Housing Establishment Funds & Private Rental Brokerage Programs
- 'Joined up' programs with the Corrections, Mental Health, Youth Justice and Alcohol and Drug service systems
- Youth brokerage and capacity building programs such as FRMP, CEEP, Living Skills
- SHASP – support for public housing tenants at risk of eviction



## Phone and after hours access

NWHNs

**1800 825 955**

- Statewide 24 hour number
- 1800 # - diverts to the nearest access point during the day
- Free call from landlines
- Those calling on mobiles need to ask for a call back
- Answered by St Kilda Crisis Services overnight
- St Kilda Crisis Service has some potential to accommodate overnight and then refer to the local access point service

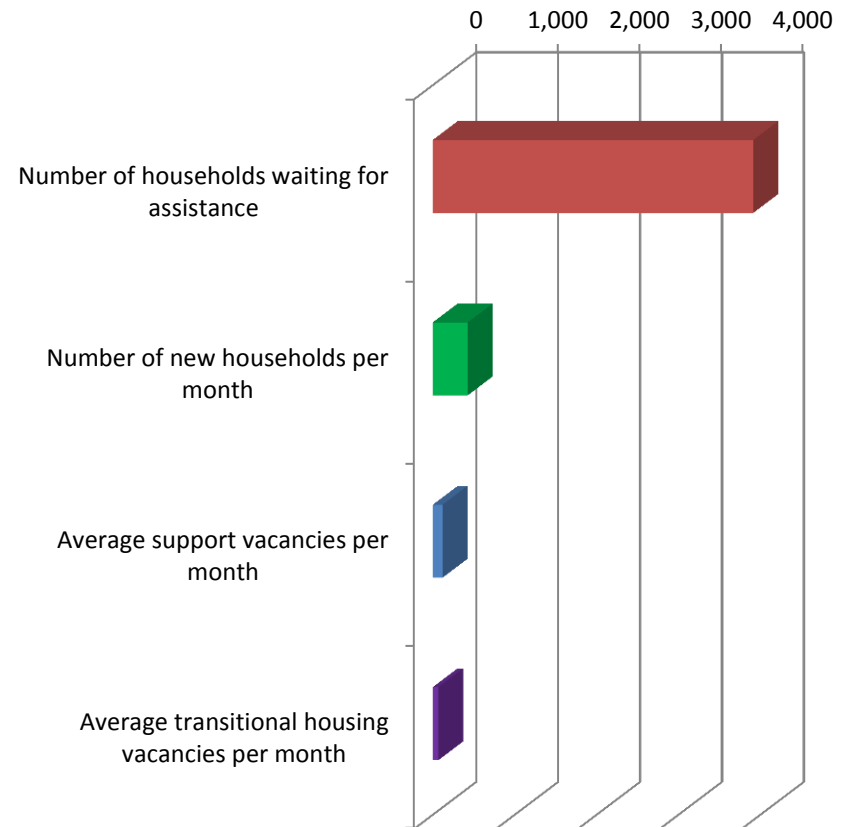
# Management of scarce resources in the north

NORTH & WEST HOMELESSNESS NETWORKS



Approximately

- 300 new households present to access points services each month.
- Each month there were around 70 transitional housing vacancies and 100 homelessness support vacancies.
- 2,811 households were awaiting homelessness assistance.
- In September 2015 2,811 households were awaiting assistance (3503 people - including 1434 children)



# Resource Allocation

NORTH & WEST HOMELESSNESS NETWORKS

NWHNs

- All resources listed on Resource Register
- Holder of resource responsible for ‘publishing’ and describing resource
- Access Points ‘best match’ to available resources
- Access Points refers to resource
- Agency accepts first eligible referral
- Agency contacts client and arranges access to resource

## Organisation of the HSS

NWHNs

- Since December 2009 homelessness assistance services have been operating as a coordinated homelessness service system
- System outlined through the 3 Opening Doors Framework documents
- The system is managed by 'Local Area Service Network' (LASN)
- Each service has at least one representative
- LASNs are supported by working groups

## Role of LASNs

NWHNs

The role of each Local Area Service Network is to:

- Develop, implement and maintain Opening Doors arrangements in their catchment
- Build on consistency and quality of service delivery practice amongst member agencies
- Coordinate referrals with allied services and services in other areas
- Undertake data monitoring and client satisfaction review for the purposes of identifying gaps and trends in service provision
- Make evidence-based recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services.

# Operational principles guiding the HSS

- Shared responsibility for consumers
- Coordinated provision of services
- Shared assessment and prioritisation approaches
- Matching client need to available resources
- Responsibility for managing the limited resources of the Sector effectively
- Focus on targeting resources to those in greatest need
- Sector management

## Opening Doors

Better access for homeless people to social housing and support services in Victoria

Framework



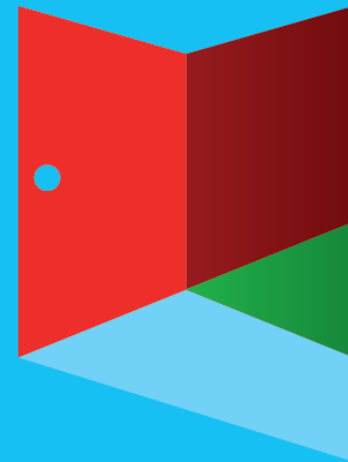
# Practice features: Opening Doors

- Strengths focused/consumer based
- Non exclusionary
- Focus on greatest need
- Consumer chooses where they would like to be assisted (address of HCC irrelevant)
- LASN manages practice improvement
- Regional guidelines

## Opening Doors

Better access for homeless people to social housing and support services in Victoria

Practice guide



# Housing and Homelessness Reform



- Significant change in the current political environment where we are seeing government at all levels developing affordable housing strategies
- The Treasurer is chairing a Housing Cabinet Taskforce
- Minister Foley will be announcing a housing affordability package later in 2016
- DHHS have announced Housing and Homelessness reform that will incorporate homelessness, social and public housing providers

DHHS announced 3 launch sites that will develop new approaches to housing and homelessness in **Brimbank/Melton, Hume/Moreland and Inner Gippsland**, that will:

- Enhance the suite of assistance options for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness,
- Target resources (brokerage housing support) effectively across the spectrum of homelessness need (at risk, first time, episodic or long term homelessness) and
- Tailor assistance to an individual or family's need (ensuring it is of sufficient intensity and duration to assist people to secure and sustain housing)



# Housing and Homelessness Reform

NWHNs

At this stage we've heard that the launch site will implement:

- A stream lined private rental access approach
- The Victorian Housing Register- combining the public and community housing waiting lists
- Choice based letting
- Bond loans Individualised and outcomes focussed approach to support
- A governance structure to oversee and inform the work of the launch sites is being finalised with representation from DHHS, homelessness and housing sector and consumers
- Co design process will be developed
- LASNs will play a crucial role in the launch site work

# Housing and Homelessness Reform

NWHNs

## Opportunities

- High light need in the region
- Think big about what would work better for the client group
- Try different approaches
- Improve data collection

## Weaknesses

- No additional resources at this stage

For further information...



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North West Homelessness Networks website

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# About NIFVS

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) is the partnership that leads the integration of family violence and related services in Melbourne's northern metropolitan region.

## Our Mission

To maintain and continually develop the integrated family violence service system in the North, in order to improve the safety of women and children and to hold perpetrators accountable for their use of violence.

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# What is integration?

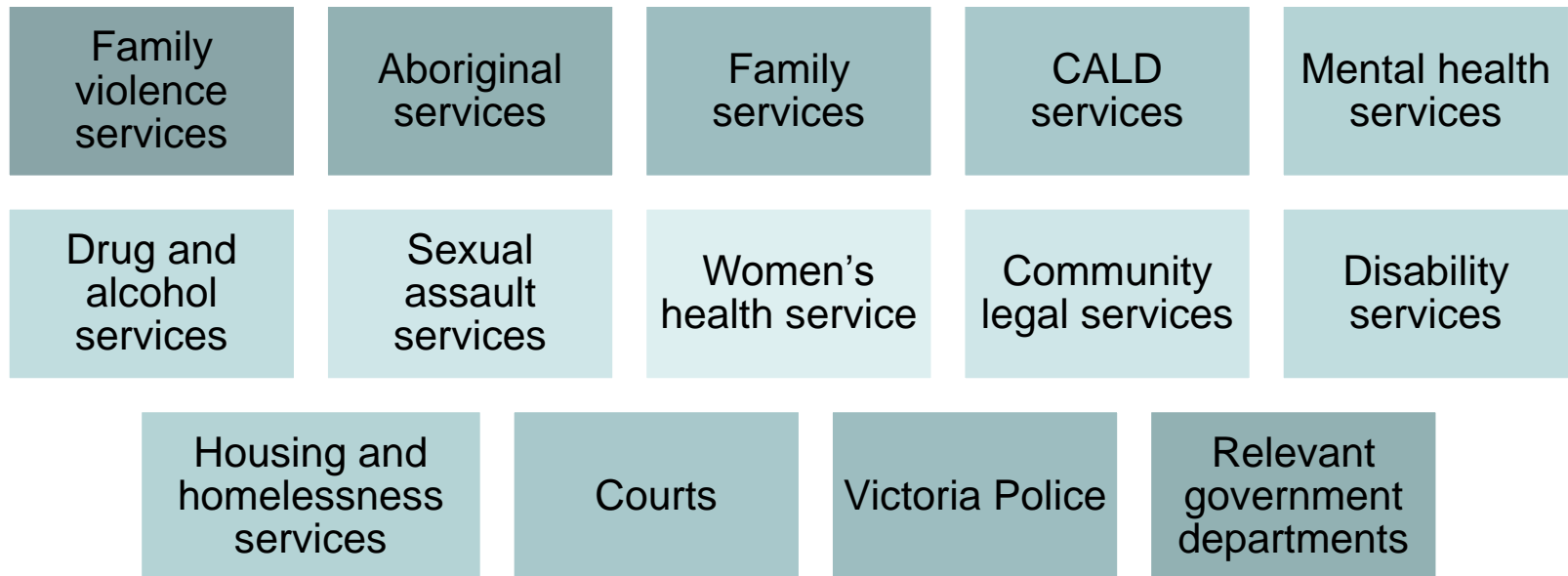
Family violence integration in the North involves:

- a **shared understanding** of family violence and a shared vision for change
- all parties **understanding** and striving to improve the system
- strong **structures and relationships** across the system
- **information-sharing and collaboration** across a broad range of organisations
- opportunities to discuss and **resolve issues**
- ensuring a '**continuum of care**' through smooth referral pathways and consistent service responses



# Regional Integration Committee

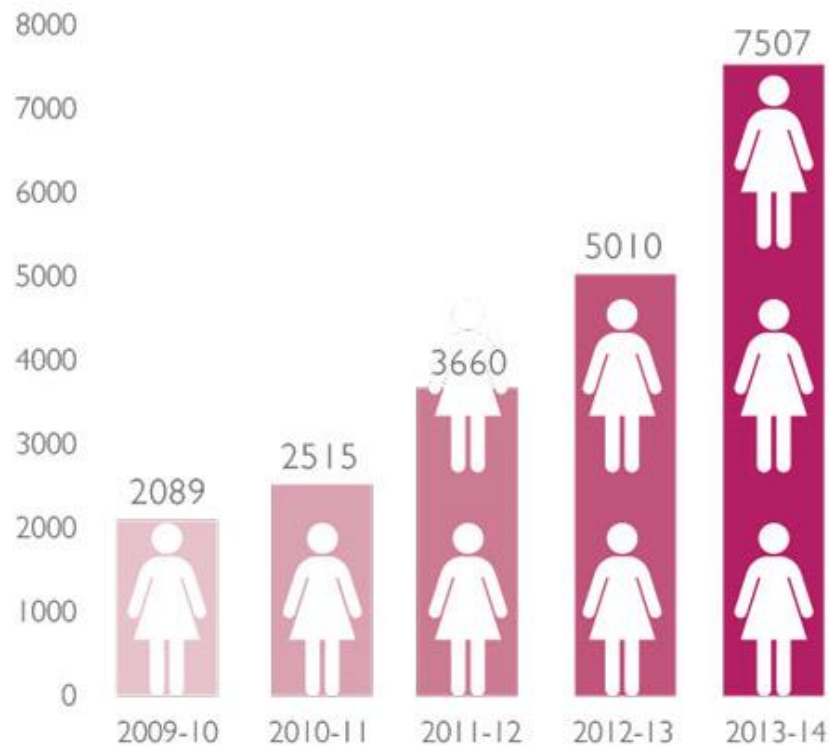
The NIFVS Regional Integration Committee identifies and prioritises local and regional family violence issues within the state-wide policy framework. Members of the committee represent **service types or sectors** including:





# Our biggest challenge

In the NMR, family violence incidents increased from 10,721 in 2013-14 to **11,961** in 2014-15.



**259%**  
increase over  
**5 years** from  
2009-10

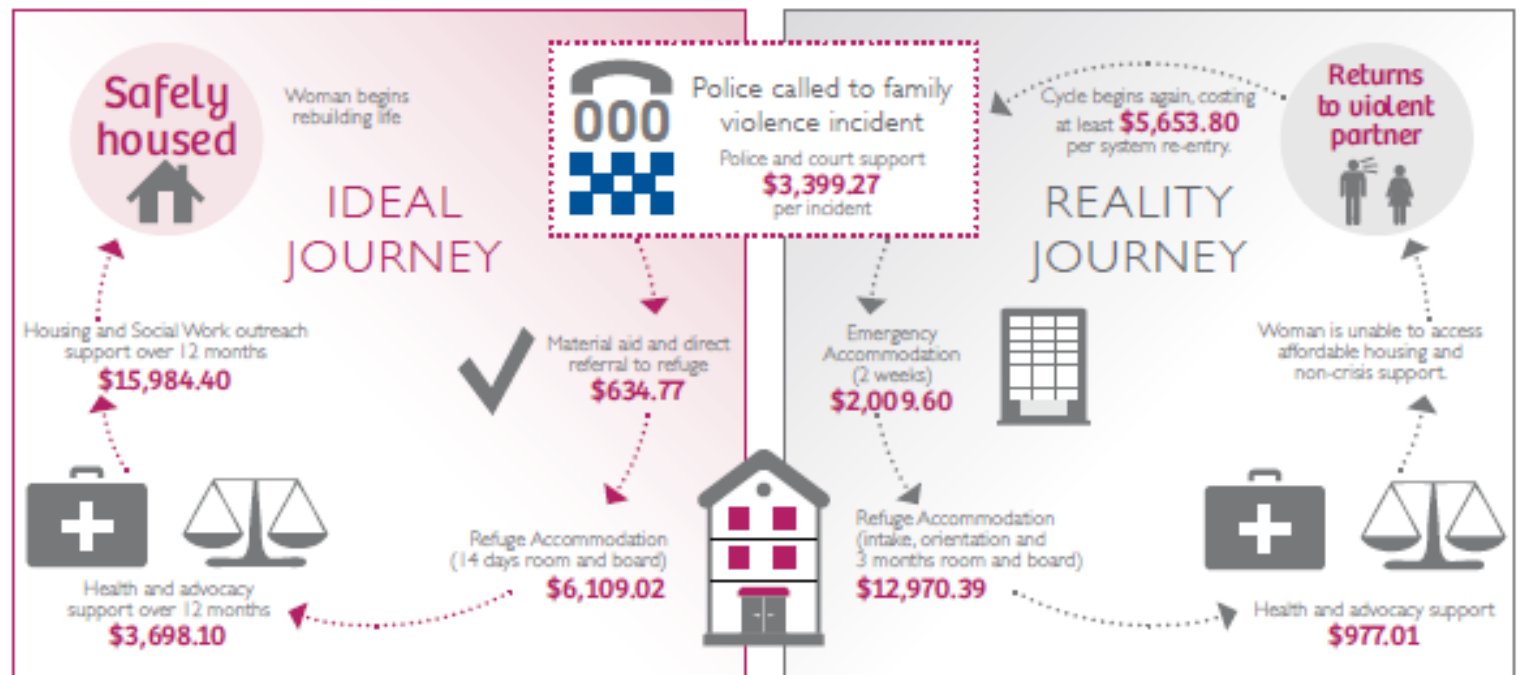
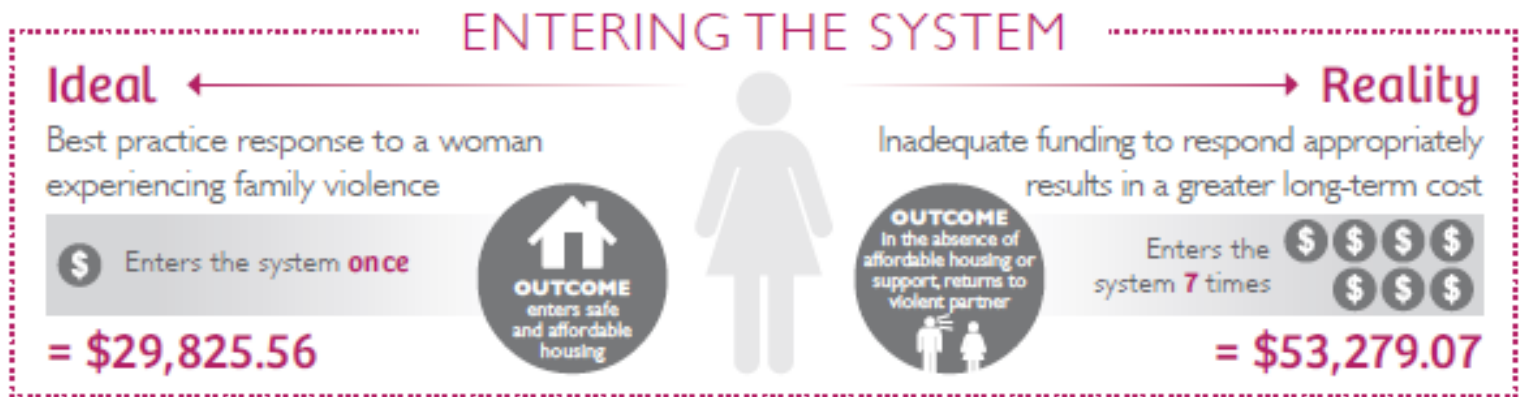
Berry Street NFDVS data





# Need for investment in housing & support

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# Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary of new approaches

- Support and Safety Hubs
- Central Information Point and information sharing regime
- Immediate funding boost to services that support victims and families
- ‘Blitz’ to rehouse women and children forced to leave their homes
- Expanded investigative capacity and mobile technology for police more specialist family violence courts
- Stronger perpetrator programs
- Family violence training for key workforces - including in hospitals, mental health, disability and AOD settings
- Stronger governance arrangements, including an independent Family Violence Agency to hold government to account.

(Adapted from “New approaches: a snapshot” in RCFV Summary and Recommendations Vol I, 2016: p15)





# Housing and homelessness recommendations

## Recommendation 17

**Expand Family Violence Flexible Support Packages** to include longer term rental and mortgage subsidies where required [within 12 months].

## Recommendation 18

Give priority to **removing current blockages in refuge and crisis accommodation and transitional housing**, so that victims of family violence:

- can gain stable housing as quickly as possible and with a minimum number of relocations,
- are not accommodated in motels and other ad hoc accommodation,
- spend on average no longer than six weeks in refuge and crisis accommodation [within two years].



# Housing and homelessness recommendations

## Recommendation 19

Establish a **Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Task Force** [within 12 months]. The task force, should:

- oversee a process designed to remove **blockages in access to family violence crisis accommodation** by rapidly rehousing family violence victims living in crisis and transitional accommodation
- design, oversee and monitor the first 18-month phase of the proposed expanded **Family Violence Flexible Support Packages**
- **quantify the number of additional social housing units required** for family violence victims who are unable to gain access to and sustain private rental accommodation
- subject to evaluation of the proposed expanded Family Violence Flexible Support Packages, **plan for the statewide roll-out of the packages and the social housing required.**



# Housing and homelessness recommendations

## Recommendation 20

The Victorian Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing **report annually** to the Parliamentary Committee on Family Violence [within two years] on:

- the **extent of unmet housing demand** among people affected by family violence including the average and range of current stays by women and children in crisis and transitional accommodation
- **progress in meeting the benchmark of six weeks in crisis accommodation**
- **proposed actions for meeting the continuing housing demand** from people affected by family violence.



# Housing and homelessness recommendations

## Recommendation 24

Support and fund youth homelessness and other youth services providers in developing and implementing a broader range of **supported accommodation options for young people experiencing family violence** [within two years].

## Recommendation 146

Provide adequate **funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations** [within 12 months] for: **crisis accommodation** and support options for Aboriginal women and children...[and] culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal men who perpetrate family violence - including **access to suitable accommodation**

## Recommendation 222

Pursue the extension of the **National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness** with the Commonwealth Government as a matter of urgency [within 12 months].



# Investment

A \$152 million package, announced in April 2016, is the first step in responding to the specific housing recommendations of the Royal Commission and includes:

- \$25 million over two years for accommodation for the homeless – this fund will support **construction of 180 new units** of crisis accommodation and **upgrades of existing accommodation**
- \$21 million over two years to begin **redeveloping existing refuges to the new core and cluster model** and to provide **24 hour staffing** at up to six refuges
- \$50 million – **rapid housing assistance** – provision of **130 new social housing properties** as a first stage and **headleasing** for up to **100 dwellings**. \$16 million in 2016-17 to provide **private rental assistance** that supports access to private rental
- \$40 million over two years to provide **flexible tailored responses**



# Implications

Royal Commission into Family Violence is a game changer for our sectors

Immediate opportunities for partnership (eg EOI for rapid rehousing funds)

Acknowledgment that women and children have the right to stay in their home – the perpetrator is the one who should be removed (Safe at Home)

Uncertainty about how funds for family violence services will be distributed in the future

Unfortunately the Royal Commission hasn't directly addressed the need to increase supply of low cost housing. (Affordable housing strategy may be introduced later in the year).



# NIFVS priorities for 2016-2017

The NIFVS Regional Integration Committee met on 8 June 2016 to identify priorities for family violence regional integration work post the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The group agreed to focus on 3 areas in 2016-17 including:

- developing key principles for **Support and Safety Hubs**
- **workforce development** planning and advocacy
- **cross sector integration** with housing and homelessness, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and health and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group.





Take a break....

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.... See you in 20 minutes





# Hypothetical

Panel members:

- Nicola Connolly, Launch Housing
- Kelly Tobin, Berry Street
- Amelia Glass, WISHIN
- **Someone, Elizabeth Morgan House**
- Laura Sherry, safe steps

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## Activity two

AT YOUR TABLE:

Discuss reflections from the hypothetical (30 mins)

- What myths/ assumptions about other sectors services has the hypothetical opened your eyes to? (yellow paper)
- What can you and/or your service do to minimise any barriers for women and children? (purple paper)
- What can our sectors do together to improve our responses to women and children experiencing family violence? (green paper)





# Staying involved

There are a number of ways to stay connected with the work of integration in the family violence sector:

- Order **Family Violence Help Cards and resources**
- Attend **Regional Family Violence Induction (14 Sept)**
- Participate in **Identifying Family Violence Training**
- Join a **Local Family Violence Network**
- Run a **Week Without Violence** event in October
- Subscribe to monthly **NIFVS eNews**

[www.nifvs.org.au](http://www.nifvs.org.au)





# Next steps

Complete your take away postcard!

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services	
As a result of today's session, I will:	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
For future referrals/secondary consultation/partnerships I will stay in contact with:	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>Phone</b>	

Visit our website at [www.nifvs.org.au](http://www.nifvs.org.au) to:

- Access notes and presentations from today's forum
- Find practice resources on housing and homelessness

# Contact Details

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Women's Health In the North acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

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