



YOUR
VOICE
AGAINST
VIOLENCE

Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

December 18, 2017

Dear Senate Standing Committee,

RE: Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill 2017 [Provisions]

Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Senate inquiry on the Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill 2017 [Provisions]. DV Vic is the peak body for specialist family violence services in Victoria, and has broad membership of over 80 statewide and regional family violence agencies – a number of which currently receive funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Our members also include community and women’s health agencies, some local governments and other community service agencies. DV Vic holds a central position in the Victorian coordinated family violence system and its governance structures.

DV Vic notes that under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022*, the Federal and State governments have made a long-term commitment to addressing the intersection of homelessness and family violence. The Third Action Plan 2016 – 2019 (p.19) demonstrates the juncture between the *National Plan* and national and state homelessness and housing policy:

3.3: Strengthen safe and appropriate accommodation options and supports for women and their children escaping violence, including specialist women’s services.

3.3(a) Assess and work to address the immediate, medium-term and long-term accommodation needs of women who are escaping violence.

3.3(b) Increase the stock of affordable, accessible and social housing and the support needed to enable women and their children, if they want to, to stay in their own homes through Safe at Home initiatives.

3.3(c) Improve the availability of accommodation for perpetrators who are removed from the home to ensure the safety of women and children in their homes.

3.3(d) Assess the effectiveness of Victoria’s use of Individual Flexible Packages for women and their children who are escaping violence as the basis of a joint review of future funding models, including a possible broader rollout.

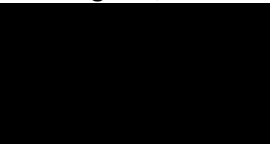
3.3(e) Develop national principles for tenancy legislation to ensure consistency across jurisdictions for women who are experiencing violence.

In light of this, DV Vic has reviewed the submissions of the **Australian Women Against Violence Alliance** and the **Council to Homeless Persons**, and *fully endorses* both. In particular, it is important to DV Vic that the Senate hears and take steps to address the following points in the National Housing and Homeless Agreement (NHHA):

- Women and children make up the majority of homeless persons in Australia, therefore the NHHA must be gender-responsive in both policy and budget in order to engage with and address the structural disadvantages faced by women and their children.
- Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homeless and housing instability in Australia. Women are regularly having to choose between escaping family violence and becoming homeless, or remaining in their homes but living with family violence. Addressing this requires Federal and State governments to develop housing and homelessness strategies and agreements that both effectively *prevent and respond* to homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence as a priority. Thus, the NHHA must reflect a commitment to both.
- *Substantial additional investment* is needed to meet housing needs and provide homelessness services, including to prevent women and children experiencing family violence from being turned away from refuges and/or being compelled to remain in violent relationships in order to prevent their homelessness. For women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence, housing options must also be *sustainably affordable*. Therefore, NHHA must protect against any reduction in funding of crisis accommodation and public housing that might be threatened as a result of rolling the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness into one, and actually be underpinned by additional growth funding that boosts the supply of housing available while also resulting in increased affordability of long-term housing.
- Social and affordable housing options *must meet the needs of all women and children experiencing family violence*. This includes those living in rural, regional and remote areas – especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women, those living with disability, and older women.
- The NHHA must *urgently remedy* the restrictions keeping women and children with temporary migration statuses in violent relationships and unsafe housing situations. Further, the Federal government must work with the States through the NHHA to take responsibility for adequately resourcing the crisis accommodation and support needs of these women and their children.

On behalf of our members, DV Vic is happy to continue assisting the Federal and State governments in respect to housing policy and funding related to homelessness resulting from family violence. Please feel free to contact me to further discuss this or any of our submissions above.

Kind regards,



Fiona McCormack
CEO

Cc. Martin Foley, Minister for Housing, Disability & Ageing, Victoria.