

MEDIA RELEASE
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YWCA calls on all Australians to join flash mob and act for more regional housing for women

In the leadup to Homelessness Week (2 – 8 August), national feminist organisation YWCA is calling on all Australians to join an online feminist group to advocate on the gendered issue of housing affordability.

YWCA Australia's Senior Manager Advocacy Bobbie Trower said that the YWCA Cyber Feminists' (CBF)ⁱ latest campaign is urging people to throw their support behind raising awareness of women's homelessness and housing insecurity in regional areas.

"Research conducted by YWCA found that one in eight women living in regional Australia has been homeless in the past five years," the gender equality expert said.

"One in five women personally knew at least one other woman who was currently homeless and two-thirds said homelessness was a growing problem in their communities. More than half of the women in the research worried they could become homeless."

YWCA's *Women's Housing Needs in Regional Australia* report, released in May 2020, is the first national study into women's access to safe, affordable housing outside Australia's capital cities and surveyed 1039 women living on low to moderate incomesⁱⁱ in regional areas.

Bobbie Trower said CBF members are mobilising on social media next week, Homelessness Week, with shareable advocacy messaging to raise awareness and encourage people, especially women in regional Australia to take action by reaching out to their local MPs to secure a commitment to investing in regional housing.

"Now is the time for women and gender diverse people to come together and say 'we deserve safe, affordable homes'. We're encouraging everyone to join YWCA's CBF and help us raise awareness on this important issue and secure meetings with MPs."

"CBF members share content on social media, then tag MPs and other power holders in advocacy posts. They help inform the community about important gender equality issues and amplify intersectional feminist voices through collective online advocacy."

"It's a powerful way for women and non-binary people to play a role in leading change that improves their own lives, lives in the community and those of future generations."

Bobbie Trower said that despite the research evidence of key needs across regional Australia, there was not yet any commitment from Federal Government to invest in affordable housing.

They said numbers of women experiencing homelessness were expected to increase in the aftermath of bushfires, droughts and the COVID-19 pandemic, due to loss of housing, jobs and disproportionate economic impacts on women. Reports of domestic and family violence are also increasing, a key driver of homelessness among women, children and young people.

Responding to housing barriers through the lens of intersectionality (understanding how race, class, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation intersect with gender) as part of a COVID-19 recovery plan is also critical. Australia's housing policy and systems must be robust and evidence based and prioritise First Nations women, migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, older women, young women, women in rural and regional Australia and LGBTIQ+ people.

“Despite the expected long-term economic impacts of COVID-19 and likely impacts on housing affordability for many vulnerable people, we are yet to see the Federal Government commit to investing in affordable, social and community housing.”

“Instead we see poorly targeted stimulus packages like HomeBuilder that put money back into the pockets of those who are already in comfortable financial and housing situations. This money would be better spent investing in affordable, social and community housing sheltering many more Australians, as well as providing economic stimulus and essential jobs for recovery, even more critical in regional Australia as we enter a recession.”

Bobbie Trower said that there are solutions for homelessness.

“We know what the solutions are – investment in housing, women's specialist services and wrap-around supports including domestic violence, employment, education and other social supports. But to see this change, we need to raise our voices in collective action and push for gender-responsive government policy and investment in housing for women. Joining the CBF is an easy and powerful way to do this.”

To join YWCA's CBF online advocacy group, visit ywca.org.au/cbf.

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About YWCA Australia

YWCA Australia is an evolving intersectional feminist organisation focused on improving gender equality for women, young women and girls. For 140 years, we have challenged the systems, structures and policies that act as barriers to women, especially young women, achieving their full potential.

We provide housing services through our subsidiaries which are registered community housing providers, collectively known as YWCA National Housing. YWCA is the only national women's community housing provider in Australia.

Our high-impact evidence-based programs and services are inclusive of women in all their diversity and offer support with housing, homelessness, safety, wellbeing and leadership. We aim to positively impact the lives of more than two million women, young women and girls by the end of 2023.

ⁱ <http://www.ywca.org.au/cbf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.ywcahousing.org.au/research>