



DEVELOPING THE NORTHERN TERRITORY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2025-30

OCTOBER 2024
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About YWCA Australia

YWCA Australia ('YWCA') is a national not-for-profit organisation that has specialised in supporting women for 140 years. YWCA provides housing, support services and leadership pathways for women, gender diverse people and their families to find security and build their futures. We are experts in gender-responsive housing and homelessness solutions. We are also a registered Tier 2 housing provider.

YWCA in the Northern Territory Community

In the Northern Territory, we provide both affordable housing, and tailored programs and services supporting women and gender diverse people. This includes lived-experience leadership training, emergency accommodation, transitional housing and case management supports, and immediate crisis accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness. As one of the only specialist domestic and family violence services in Darwin with integrated homelessness support, YWCA improves housing outcomes for young Territorian women, gender diverse people and their families.

YWCA partners with the NT government on a raft of wraparound services across Greater Darwin, Palmerston, and the surrounding areas, including:

- The Connected Families Program: Providing targeted assistance to young parents/carers aged 25 years and under, in parenting their children, including supporting them to reduce risk, increase housing security, and connect with community supports so they can enjoy increased wellbeing and safety.
- The Domestic and Family Violence Centre (DFVC): Short to medium term accommodation and case management support to families escaping DFSV
- Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes (KWSITH) Program: Federal funding to undertake risk assessments, safety planning and security upgrades to support women and children experiencing DFSV to remain in their homes.
- Housing Support Program including CASY House: Emergency accommodation shelter for young people aged 15-18 who are either experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in Darwin and the Youth Housing Options & Pathways Program (YHOPP) (in partnership with Anglicare NT) for young people aged 15–24 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Palmerston, with a strong focus on securing longer term housing.
- Specialist DFV Counselling Program: Offering specialist co-located counselling services at the DFVC for victim-survivors.
- Specialist Early Intervention Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF) Case Managers based in YWCA crisis accommodation for young people.
- Amplifying Voices Program: Engaging young women and gender diverse people with lived experience of DFSV to lead advocacy and influence systems reforms through primary prevention activities, across the Territory.

As a trusted NT government partner, YWCA's extensive suite of community programs receive the following government support:

Program Name
Amplifying Voices
Connected Families
Domestic Family Violence Centre (DFVC)
DFVC - National Partnership Agreement
RAMF Specialist Case Manager - Casy House
Housing Support Program - Casy House
Housing Support Program - Women Housing Support
Housing Support Program - Youth Transitional Housing
Medical Accommodation Program - Barbara James House
Medical Accommodation Program - Dr Helen Phillips Cottage

The Mitchell Street Project for Darwin

At YWCA, we are dedicated to enhancing housing security and reducing homelessness for women and gender diverse people. Safe, secure, and affordable housing is foundational to any effective homelessness strategy. Through our Mitchell Street Project, we are actively seeking to expand local housing to deliver 94 social and affordable homes in Darwin, a collaborative effort between YWCA, Federal, and Territory Governments. This development will house First Nations women and families, as well as women and children escaping domestic and family violence, alongside affordable housing options for low- to medium-income earners and essential workers.

The 2024-25 Northern Territory Budget includes a \$12 million investment to support the redevelopment of housing on Shiers Street and the Mitchell Street project. We welcome this allocation and are committed to securing further funding to deliver a shovel-ready project for priority cohorts, aligning with targets in the National Housing Accord, Social Housing Accelerator Fund, and Housing Australia Future Fund.

YWCA's project is more than new units in the Darwin CBD; it's a vital resource for Territorians facing homelessness, domestic violence, and an urgent shortage of affordable housing.

1. Key challenges contributing to people experiencing homelessness in the Northern Territory

Family and domestic violence and sector challenges

The dual and connected challenges contributing to women and their children experiencing homelessness in the Northern Territory are the alarming rates of domestic and family violence and the severe shortage of social and affordable housing. Specialist Homelessness Services ('SHS') data from 2022-23 demonstrates that in the Northern Territory:¹

- One in 25 people received homelessness assistance, compared to the national rate of one in 95.
- The rates of female SHS clients is more than four times the national rate, and a significantly higher rate than any other State or Territory.
- Women make up two-thirds of SHS clients, almost double that of their male counterparts and almost ten points higher than the national representation for female clients.
- Domestic and family violence is the top reason for seeking assistance (56%, compared with 36% nationally), with 81% of those respondents being women.
- 59% of all female SHS clients cite domestic and family violence as their reason for seeking assistance.

Women experiencing domestic and family violence are at the helm of a homelessness crisis in the Northern Territory. The reported Specialist Homelessness Services data alone paints a stark and dire picture. However, as the experts in gender-responsive housing and homelessness services, we know that this data does not paint the full picture of the crises for Territorian women.

A core challenge to addressing these crises for Territorian women, is a common practice whereby when a woman and her children experiencing violence seek homelessness supports, they are referred out of the homelessness services sector to the domestic violence sector. This means that despite the large number of female specialist homelessness clients, there are scores of Territorian women and children who are not receiving or being considered for the homelessness services and supports that they need and are entitled to.

Given the rates of family and domestic violence in the Northern Territory are three times higher than the national average and are increasing yearly,² a better and less siloed approach would be collaboration between agencies to better respond to women experiencing homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence. YWCA can attest to the success of this integrated response approach through our own service delivery

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist homelessness services 2022-23 – Data tables, and Fact sheet: Specialist homelessness services 2022-23: Northern Territory. Note that the comparative national and jurisdictional data is based on clients per 10,000 ERP – rates are crude rates based on the Australian estimated resident population at 30 June of the reference year, as detailed in the online technical information of the data tables.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au), Recorded Crime – Victims, 2021.

models which include homelessness and case management services for youth, women, gender diverse people and their families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This course towards integrated service delivery can be paved through robust gender-based policies and gender responsive funding allocations under the forthcoming Strategy.

In NSW, for example, the specialist homelessness system across the State includes a network of women's refuges supporting women with or without children escaping and domestic violence. Moreover, over half of the specialist homelessness services across the state include a specialist response for women.³ Unlike other Australian jurisdictions such as NSW, funding for refuges and safe houses in the Northern Territory falls within the scope of the domestic violence rather than the specialist homelessness sector. This is a concerning inconsistency in policy approach which has flow on effects to limiting appropriate service sector responses, and limiting the accurate capturing data on the need for specialist homelessness services for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

The strain on refuges and safe houses in the Northern Territory is only driving the homelessness crisis deeper for Territorian women and children. These services are under-funded, and as a result, are struggling to keep up with increasing demand across the region. There is a significant need within the Northern Territory for additional safe houses as essential immediate and crisis responses, as well as medium to long-term affordable housing options to truly halt and reverse the homelessness crisis.⁴ Ultimately, there must be a balanced and forward-thinking approach to both respond to immediate need for crisis accommodation, and to pave the path towards secure, affordable and long-term housing for women and children to build and live their lives free from domestic and family violence.

Women and their children in the Northern Territory driven to homelessness because of family and domestic violence, are still experiencing homelessness. As such, they must receive services from the specialist homelessness sector tailored to meeting their housing needs. To support the work of the specialist homelessness sector via wrap around safety planning and support, the domestic and family violence sector must be supported with needs based funding to meet the true scale of the demand.

Significant shortage of social and affordable housing

Another key homelessness driver is the significant shortage of social and affordable housing in the Northern Territory. There is a shortfall of 12,000 social and affordable homes, with homelessness rates 12 times the national average. Almost half of all people experiencing homelessness are under 25 years old with 3,000 young people homeless on any given night.⁵ Severe overcrowding accounts for the majority of homelessness rates, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples disproportionately impacted. This matrix of factors compounds to ballooning housing waiting periods ranging from two to eight or more years depending on location.⁶

³ NSW Government – Department of Communities and Justice, Our homelessness programs, (last updated 22 October 2024, available at: facs.nsw.gov.au).

⁴ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2019). Domestic and family violence, housing insecurity and homelessness: Research synthesis (2nd Ed.; ANROWS Insights, 07/2019). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

⁵ AnglicareNT, (2024), Rental Affordability in the Northern Territory: Snapshot Report 2024.

⁶ National Territory Council of Social Services ('NTCOSS'), Annual Report 2022-23, 15; Community Housing Industry Association NT ('CHIA NT') Supplementary submission to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, (2023) 1.

Three core impacts tied to the region's severe shortage of social and affordable housing options are as follows:

- i. **Victim-survivors of family and domestic violence becoming homeless due to an over-reliance on a critical shortage of safe housing.** This is reflected in Katherine, with record high homelessness and domestic and family violence rates, with only one safe house facility and no other crisis accommodation in the region. The lack of social and affordable housing options and specialist homelessness services for these women and their children, force them to 'choose' between abusive family relationships or sleeping rough.⁷
- ii. **People on income support and low incomes are locked out of the Northern Territory private rental market.**⁸ The consequences are extreme stress on these cohorts, and increased stress on a private rental market for cohorts who should have access to social and affordable housing.
- iii. **People becoming homeless after being pulled from remote, regional, and rural communities to Darwin to access health⁹ and other services and to connect with families and networks.** Upon arriving in Darwin, Territorians may remain either by choice or forced by circumstances, and become homeless due to a lack of appropriate housing options. This issue disproportionately impacts First Nations communities that may experience homelessness in the long grass.¹⁰

Significant costs for social and affordable housing

Darwin's construction costs are significantly higher than the national average, while market valuations remain low. This makes traditional affordable housing development financially challenging in the region. The YWCA Mitchell Street project is the first multi-story residential building planned in the CBD since 2015, reflecting the difficulty of developing affordable housing in this environment.

Traditional funding models leave a substantial gap between what it costs to build and the project's value. As a result, steps need to be taken to bridge the gap between project costs for housing and market valuation to get critical projects, like the Mitchell Street project off the ground, to build more social and affordable housing in the Northern Territory.

⁷ ABC News – Samantha Dick, Domestic violence survivors rendered homeless in Katherine due to lack of crisis accommodation (12 July 2023, available at abc.net.au).

⁸ Above n 5. 0% of rentals being affordable and appropriate for a person on the JobSeeker payment, Youth Allowance or the Disability Support Pension, or single retirees on the Age Pension. Working people are hardly better off, with only 0.5% of rentals being affordable for a single person working full-time on the minimum wage.

⁹ This travel also occurs in connection with Government policies such as the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme.

¹⁰ Council to Homeless Persons, Parity: Responding to Homelessness in the Northern Territory, (June 2024) Volume 37 – Issue 5.

2. Initiatives that will most effectively respond to the drivers of homelessness in the Northern Territory

Early Intervention and Prevention

Intervening to prevent a homelessness crisis driven by family and domestic violence calls for gender-based policies. The Strategy must complement the Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018 – 2028 with a core outcome to reduce, eliminate and prevent homelessness driven by domestic and family violence.

YWCA operates the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes ('KWSITH') program which is recognised as a primary response for the Northern Territory under the national KWSITH initiative of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 for high risk victim survivors.¹¹

YWCA's KWSITH program provides security upgrades for homes to ensure women and their children, who have experienced violence, are able to stay safely in the home of their choice. Clients of the program are also provided with case management support by YWCA where it is needed. This program is funded by the Northern Territory Government, but the funding does not cover the full need and demand for the program. Additional funding from the Northern Territory Government towards the YWCA KWSITH is essential to meet this effective and in-demand program.

Our vision is for the program to be operated by specialist domestic violence service providers across the Northern Territory, from its urban to most remote corners. As the cornerstone program providing this service within the Northern Territory, we extend the offer to the Northern Territory government to be consulted on the need and process for this expansion.

One of our core recommendations is that there must be a whole-of-system, integrated program which facilitates the removal of perpetrators from the home that women and their children are residing in. From a practical perspective based on other jurisdictional approaches and the pillars of keeping women safe in their homes, this must include:¹²

i. A coordinated and integrated response:

This requires partnerships between local and government services to best address client needs. This means robust and client-centred partnerships between services, court support and police response to perpetrators. Measures that may need to be considered are whether legislative reform is required, expanding police training, and funding case management and other supportive services for women experiencing domestic and family violence.

¹¹ See Australian Government, Department of Social Services, Ending gender-based violence 'Keeping Women Safe in their Homes', (last updated 6 September 2024, available at: dss.gov.au); Breckenridge, J., Whitten, T., Burton, M., Dubler, N., & Suchting, M. (2022) Staying Home Leaving Violence Evaluation: Final Report. Sydney: Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Sydney, 132 – 133.

¹² Ibid 29.

ii. A focus on maximising women's safety:

This can be achieved through a combination of criminal justice responses and technology options such as protection orders and legal provisions to exclude and remove the perpetrator from the home. Safety planning and ongoing risk assessments consistent with the Risk Assessment and Management Framework and Common Risk Assessment Tool are critical to this response.

The safety technology currently used within the Northern Territory can also be elevated to provide additional supports. In particular, the mCareWatch which is a personal duress alarm response has proven significantly effective within other jurisdictions, like NSW to discretely alert the police when a perpetrator has entered the home and to have the perpetrator apprehended and removed. Similar products are currently being trialled by the YWCA in the Northern Territory, but funding constraints will limit their eventual availability.

Overall, keeping women safe in their homes is a homelessness prevention strategy for women and their children at risk of homelessness because of domestic and family violence. We recommend a whole-of-system approach to preventing homelessness in the first place and to address domestic and family violence. If uplifted across the sector, this approach can provide enormous impact for women and children facing the brunt of these crises and be a core response towards reversing the trend of escalating homelessness in the Northern Territory.

Providing housing and building an effective homelessness services system

The Strategy can be critical to ensuring the optimised allocation of increased funding to the homelessness sector under the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness ('NASHH'). The NASHH is a significant investment which will complement the existing Housing Australia Future Fund ('HAFF'). Under the NASHH, the Northern Territory will be receiving \$278 million over five years to boost social housing and specialist homelessness services. That funding is constituted by:¹³

- Annual allocations of \$12.8 million for housing, and \$42.8 million for specialist homelessness services such as youth and family support, crisis intervention, and dignity services – more than seven times the amount previously allocated;
- An additional \$25 million for crisis and transitional accommodation for youth, and women and children escaping domestic and family violence; and
- An additional \$25 million for essential infrastructure to expedite housing construction.

It is a clear objective for funding to be allocated to building social housing and expanding specialist homelessness services for youth, and women and children escaping domestic and family violence who face the brunt of the homelessness crisis. According to this objective, the Strategy must be utilised to optimise funding towards:

¹³ Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce News - Ngaree Ah Kit, Minister for Urban Housing, Funding Boost for NT Housing and Homelessness Services, (last accessed 31 October 2024, available at: <https://chambernt.com.au/>).

- i. **Building and supporting the construction of gender-responsive social and affordable housing.** This means investing in the bricks and mortar of social housing. This is essential to get critical projects, like the YWCA Mitchell Street project of the ground and to meet the needs of priority cohorts. This investment needs to be distributed from urban to remote regions on a needs basis.
- ii. **Expanding and directing the specialist homelessness services sector to support victim-survivors of family and domestic violence.** This means expanding the sector to better protect women and children in their homes, as discussed above. This also means a policy and sector shift to ensure that women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and homelessness are not shifted out of the specialist homelessness services sector to the domestic violence services sector for their housing needs. Instead, there must be an integrated approach between the sectors where victim-survivors can have their housing needs met by a well-resourced homelessness services sector, and they can receive specialist wrap-around support by the domestic and family violence services sector.
- iii. **Expanding housing and specialist homelessness services for young people, especially young women and gender diverse people, at risk of or experiencing homelessness.** As previously stated, there is a significant crisis of youth homelessness in the Northern Territory. Effective solutions to this crisis require gender based housing and service supports tailored for young women, men and gender diverse people. At YWCA through our housing and program Casy House, we are seeking to expand our capacity to house young women and gender diverse people in the Northern Territory and to provide them with increased wrap-around support which is needed when facing homelessness.
- iv. **Implementing a robust system of outreach and tenancy support services for women and their children.** By building this response, we can prevent women from becoming homeless and needing to relocate to crisis accommodation. An integrated response means (i) intervening early (ii) working with women who are both independent or with children to be rehoused rapidly or to have their house made secure – adopting housing first principles and (iii) service responses and specialist case management responses to support women once housed to sustain their tenancies and to begin the process of recovery and healing from trauma. Whilst this is essential for women and children who are experiencing domestic and family violence, we call for this integrated approach to be extended to all women at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The Northern Territory Government must have a commitment to building a whole-of-system housing approach for women and gender diverse people. This means working with the domestic violence services sector to ensure the building of more safe houses, and more transitional housing.

There must also be serious consideration to increasing housing products, through subsidies or otherwise, that enable priority cohorts who are locked out of the private rental market to access rentals. An example of this policy approach is the NSW Rent Choice Start Safely,¹⁴ which provides short to medium-term private rental assistance for

¹⁴ NSW Government Department of Communities and Justice, Rent Choice Start Safely, (last published 16 July 2024, accessible at: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/factsheets/start-safely>).

people who do not have a stable and secure place to live due to domestic or family violence.

Another practical policy change which would improve effectiveness is the review of the “Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy Policy” of the Northern Territory Government, specifically Part 5.2 “Previous tenancy history” for urban allocations of social housing.¹⁵ That part provides that an applicant for social housing must provide two current and verifiable tenancy references. We submit that this requirement should be removed at least for priority cohorts, including women escaping domestic and family violence. The policy is overly onerous and the exemptions available are limited and left to discretion. The requirement in the policy should be reserved to the private rental market, not for women escaping domestic and family violence who have a priority need for social housing and who are locked out of that private rental market.

We know, firsthand, the unreasonableness of this policy and the impacts it creates both for women and children and our service sector. By way of example, we know of a woman who accessed two different transitional accommodations for the purpose of obtaining “two current and verifiable tenancy references” needed for her application for social housing. This policy drives women experiencing homelessness to multiple temporary placements only to procure these references for social housing, when the women should just be housed in social housing in the first instance. Not only does policy create adverse conditions for women and their children, often re-traumatising them in the process, it is also an inefficient use of funds and scant resourcing within an already constrained service environment.

Providing support to maintain stable housing

Once stable housing is secured for an individual at risk or experiencing homelessness, there must be ongoing support to maintain that housing. Examples of effective supports include:

- Supporting women and their children experiencing family and domestic violence to remain in their home or a home of their choosing, whilst leaving and being protected from their perpetrator;
- Case management and wrap-around supports for people in social housing, as discussed earlier;
- Additional assistance and support for people coming to Darwin from rural, regional, or remote areas.

Building and maintaining an effective homelessness service system

An effective homelessness service system is one that integrates and addresses the primary driver of homelessness for women and children in the Northern Territory - family and domestic violence. To have transparent, data-driven approaches, to improve outcomes for women at risk and experiencing homelessness, and to address the

¹⁵ Northern Territory Government Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy, 5.2 (approved 26 March 2024, available at: https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/266102/allocation-commencement-tenancy-policy.pdf).

disproportionate impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, this is necessary.

We note that within the specialist homelessness sector there is a major push for a single point of referral for people at risk or experiencing homelessness. We support a dedicated policy and investment framework towards a single point of referral to services and vacancies to improve housing outcomes for all women, including women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

A dedicated approach to single point of referral must operate within and outside of standard business operating hours and be accessible across urban to rural areas. By having an after-hours agency operating across the Northern Territory, outcomes will be improved for people at risk and experiencing homelessness. This in turn will provide immediate relief for other public services, such as the police and hospital staff, who are tasked with these roles after hours which can be undertaken by a specialist homelessness agency.

An integrated homelessness system should be supported by the introduction of a sector wide homelessness risk assessment tool such as the Common Risk Assessment Tool which was introduced to support victim survivors of domestic and family violence. The introduction of a sector wide homelessness risk assessment tool will facilitate and shared language and understanding for the risk level of individuals across government and the non-government sector.

It is essential that a single referral point has a low bar to connect people facing homelessness to the appropriate service. Once referred to a service, that service can then undertake a comprehensive assessment of their needs and homelessness risk. If the referral point was responsible for undertaking extensive assessments, this would add an additional interaction where a person facing homelessness has to tell their story and accordingly another point of risk of re-traumatisation – particularly for women escaping domestic and family violence.

The Strategy must also be centred on building and maintaining an effective homelessness system workforce from sourcing to training and supporting the workforce. Priority areas for training are:

- Trauma-informed service delivery for youth, women and children experiencing domestic and family violence,
- Culturally safe service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients,
- Understanding domestic, family and sexual violence.

3. Government and stakeholder actions to implement effective responses under the forthcoming Strategy

In light of the key challenges contributing to people experiencing homelessness and the most effective initiatives to respond to those challenges, YWCA recommends the following government and stakeholder actions be considered in the forthcoming Strategy:

1. The Strategy must have a core pillar to prevent, reduce and eliminate homelessness experienced by youth, and women and children, which is caused by domestic and family violence.
2. The Strategy must fund gender responsive housing and homelessness services. This will require:
 - a. The uplifting of the sector to support early intervention and prevention of homelessness for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence across the region from the Darwin CBD to remote Northern Territory. This includes a whole of sector response to keep women safer in their homes and to bolster measures around the removal of perpetrators from the home;
 - b. Building and supporting the construction of gender-responsive social and affordable housing for youth, women and children, and gender diverse people;
 - c. Investing in and building a specialist homelessness services system which can meet the needs of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence;
 - d. Reviewing and bolstering tenancy support services, government policies, and support payments to ensure people experiencing or at risk of homelessness have the highest chance of securing a private rental or social and affordable housing. This is particularly important for youth, and women escaping domestic and family violence.
 - e. Introducing a single point of referral service which is designed to support and streamline processes both for the service sector, and for people seeking support from the sector.
3. The funding and contracting landscape must be re-designed to meet true cost and need for services, and there must be parity across funded specialist homelessness services. Measures must be taken to uplift the base level funding to approximately 19% across the sector to address the loss of funding caused by the Northern Territory Government's previous funding decisions.

It has been widely reported by non-government organisations including YWCA, NT Shelter and NT Council for Social Services, that a decision by the NT Government to introduce efficiency dividends and budget savings measures to the application of indexation payments since 2019 has had a real and significant impact on community sector budgets. The loss of funding has resulted in a reduction in services and support to clients.

YWCA calculations show that the total indexation funding paid by the NT Government from 2019 to 2024 is 0.61%. Consumer Price Index increases during the same period is calculated at 19.2%. This equates to a gap of 18.6% over the period. In reality, the loss of service to the community as a result is a reduction in housing, a reduction in staff and a reduction in overall brokerage and support.

4. In light of the uplift of funding under the NASHH, the Northern Territory Government must take measures to frontend the whole of service system design to addressing homelessness in the Northern Territory before procuring contracts for tender.

This planning is essential to ensuring that the Government's Strategy is forward thinking and well-planned out, as opposed to a patch-work response to the crisis. That design must be developed in collaboration with the service sector, as well as people with lived experience of homelessness. This timing and planning is crucial for stability and transparency of information and process for the sector, as well as to bring alignment towards common goals towards tackling the homelessness crisis between government and sector stakeholders.

5. The Northern Territory needs a policy and funding re-structure to integrate domestic violence crisis accommodation, refuges, and safe houses within the specialist homelessness sector.

Youth, women, and children at risk or experiencing homelessness because of domestic and family violence are provided housing support directly by the specialist homelessness services sector. That support should be supplanted not substituted by support from the domestic and family violence services sector.

6. The Northern Territory Government hosts a Summit to address the dual crises of homelessness and domestic and family violence in the region.

The Summit should be a vehicle for co-design for plans to reduce and eliminate homelessness in the Northern Territory, including through priorities for investment under Federal and Territory based funding.

That Summit should be a meeting between Territory government leaders, including a cross-section of Cabinet, Shadow Cabinet, and local government representatives; sector and service provider representatives; community leaders; and, lived experience representing identified priority cohorts including women, youth, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

7. Ongoing Government Roundtables established on the progress under the Strategy towards preventing, reducing and eliminating homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Government representatives to the Roundtables should include the Chief Minister, Attorney-General the Minister for Housing and Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Children and Families. The Roundtable should be

supported by an Advisory Group to government which is constituted by stakeholders aligned with those represented at the Summit, including people with lived experience.¹⁶

8. A Lived Experience Advisory Group and mechanism is formed and embedded within the Strategy. The YWCA Amplifying Voices program in the Northern Territory can form part of that mechanism.

It is essential that people with lived experience are formed as a group to formally provide input into the design and assessment of policies to address homelessness within the Northern Territory. The Amplifying Voices group within YWCA can be a source of reference for the government, as the program engages young women and gender diverse people with lived experience of DFSV to lead advocacy and influence systems reforms through primary prevention activities, across the Territory.

9. Transparent and accurate data collection relevant to the rates of and service responses to homelessness driven by domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory. That data should:

- Capture rates of homelessness driven by domestic and family for priority cohorts including youth, women and children, gender diverse people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Capture the supports provided to victim-survivors at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including whether they have been supported through specialist homelessness service sector or referred out to the domestic violence sector;
- Capture the gap and waiting time between victim-survivors in need of housing compared to victim-survivors which have been housed in safe and appropriate social and affordable housing;
- Be a measure to quantify needs-based funding and to track the success of the Strategy towards reducing and eliminating homelessness;
- Be publicly accessible and informed by best practice principles of data accessibility.

10. Increase public awareness and education on homelessness and housing insecurity and the services available within the Northern Territory.

This education should focus on addressing the gap in victim-survivors in identifying their eligibility for services, and in knowing where to access services. The education should address the hidden forms of homelessness for women and their children, as well as the specialist homelessness services and the domestic and family violence services that are available to them. The information must be tailored to and co-designed with priority cohorts, including women, youth, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

¹⁶ See a comparable initiative in Queensland: The Queensland Cabinet and Ministerial Directory, Government roundtable examines safe housing solutions for domestic and family violence victims, (Media Statement, 9 June 2021), available at: <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/92313>.

11. Ensure the Strategy is robustly informed and co-designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. The Strategy must be culturally informed and safe, and align with the Government's commitments to Closing the Gap.

Concluding Remarks

YWCA Australia thanks the Department of Children and Families and the Nous Group for the opportunity to provide this submission. YWCA extends the offer to engage in further collaboration and consultation around the development of the Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2025-30. For any questions relating to this submission or for any requests for further consultation, please contact the following YWCA representatives:

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General Manager of Advocacy and External Affairs, Kate Whittle:
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Campaigns and Advocacy Officer, Bianca Tini Brunozzi:
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Bianca Tini Brunozzi

From: Bianca Tini Brunozzi
Sent: Monday, 6 January 2025 4:32 PM
To: homelessness.strategy@nt.gov.au
Cc: Rachael Uebergang; Helen Waters Silvia; Kate Whittle
Subject: YWCA Australia Feedback - Draft NT Homelessness Strategy 2025-2030
Attachments: YWCA Australia - Submission to develop the Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2025-30.pdf

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity for further consultation towards the development of the *Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2025 – 2030*.

By way of context, my name is Bianca Tini Brunozzi, and I am the Campaigns and Advocacy Officer at YWCA Australia. I work alongside Rachael Uebergang – Regional Manager of YWCA Australia’s Service Delivery operations in the Northern Territory, who was provided with the below correspondence. We note that YWCA Australia is the leading gender responsive housing provider operating nationally, with specific affordable housing and tailored programs and services supporting women and gender diverse people in the Northern Territory.

I. Priorities within the Strategy

I note and attach a copy of our initial consultation submission to the Department of Children and Families sent to the Nous Group.

We acknowledge and commend the Department for the development of this Strategy which aligns with our core policy recommendations around:

- Developing a more integrated homelessness system which focuses on early intervention and prevention, better coordinated approaches, and system effectiveness, quality, and accountability.
- A focus on meeting the needs of women and children experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence and young people in the Northern Territory and the intersection of homelessness and housing insecurity and DFSV. Acknowledging YWCA's innovative approach to providing integrated services.

- A focus on group specific accommodation and housing for women and families who have experienced domestic, family, and sexual violence, and young people in the Northern Territory.
- Establishing advisory and action groups under the Strategy which are guided by a matrix of stakeholders including from the specialist homelessness services sector and people with lived experience. Relatedly, the development of regional and place-based plans with the delivery of capital and operational funding which is guided by these stakeholders.

II. YWCA Australia's alignment with and support for the Strategy operations from 2025 – 2030

Through our extensive operations within the Northern Territory, YWCA Australia extends our ongoing support towards the achievement of the priorities of the Northern Territory government in the Strategy. In alignment with the Strategy, we recommend the following additional incorporations to the Strategy and/or actions by the Northern Territory government under the Strategy:

- **Consider adopting the YWCA Australia Women's Housing Framework as a standard through the Strategy.**

The YWCA Australia's [Women's Housing Framework](#) (the Framework) is an evidence-based model that prioritises safety, accessibility, and tailored housing solutions for women and their families. Co-designed with women who have lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness, the Framework outlines principles for delivering housing that improves wellbeing, safety, and long-term outcomes. The Framework is supported by the [Women's Liveability Assessment](#) - an online audit tool that helps community housing providers, governments and other housing providers to ensure their housing meets the unique needs of their women residents. Our recommendation is to integrate the Framework through the Strategy into the government's housing project evaluation criteria to ensure that social and affordable housing is gender responsive in the Northern Territory.

- **Governance: Representatives of YWCA Australia to be members of the Homelessness Strategic Advisory Group and Priority Action Group.**

YWCA Australia can offer valuable membership to the Homelessness Strategic Advisory Group and the sub-group, Priority Action Group. YWCA Australia is a local specialist homelessness service system representative and community housing provider that works with women, gender diverse people and youth experiencing homelessness in the Northern Territory. In line with the strategic priorities of the Plan, we have a dedicated focus on women and their families facing domestic, family, and sexual violence, as well as young people.

In addition to the opportunity to provide value as a Specialist Homelessness Service representative, and leading provider of Domestic and Family Violence services, YWCA Australia operates the Amplifying Voices Program in the Northern Territory. Funded by the Northern Territory Government, our Amplifying Voices program supports women and gender diverse people with lived experience of family and domestic violence and/or homelessness to harness their lived experience expertise to provide input and advice to decision makers, and use their expertise to lead real change in their community. Through the SHS recommissioning process we are seeking to evolve this program to respond to the NT Government's commitment to ensure the voices of those with lived experience are included in future service design, through a lived experience mechanism.

- **Investment into social and affordable housing for women and their families experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence and youth through YWCA Australia's housing initiatives in the Northern Territory**

YWCA Australia commends the Northern Territory government for adopting priority focus on women and their families experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence, and youth under the Strategy. Moreover, we value the considerations in the Strategy around capital and operational funding and place-based planning. YWCA Australia has two housing projects in the Northern Territory that would be a strategic focus to support the priority needs to address homelessness in the Northern Territory. We submit that these projects should be a direct focus under the Strategy, or a priority consideration put forward through the operations of the Strategy and the establishment of the overseeing advisory and action groups. Further information about those two projects are detailed as follows:

The Mitchell Street Project for Darwin

At YWCA, we are dedicated to enhancing housing security and reducing homelessness for women and gender diverse people. Safe, secure, and affordable housing is foundational to any effective homelessness strategy. Through our Mitchell Street Project, we are actively seeking to expand local housing to deliver 94 social and affordable homes in Darwin, a collaborative effort between YWCA, Federal, and Territory Governments. This development will house First Nations women and families, as well as women and children escaping domestic and family violence, alongside affordable housing options for low- to medium-income earners and essential workers.

YWCA's project is more than new units in the Darwin CBD; it's a vital resource for Territorians facing homelessness, domestic violence, and an urgent shortage of affordable housing.

Casy House

As recognised by the Northern Territory government, there is a significant crisis of youth homelessness in the Northern Territory. Effective solutions to this crisis require gender-based housing and service supports tailored for young women, men, and gender diverse people.

YWCA Australia operates housing support programs. A notable program is CASY House, which is emergency accommodation shelter for young people aged 15 -18 who are either experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in Darwin.

At YWCA through our housing and program Casy House, we are seeking to expand our capacity to house young women and gender diverse people in the Northern Territory and to provide them with increased wrap-around support which is needed when facing homelessness, in doing so, addressing a dire and widely recognised need.

III. Thank you for the opportunity to consult on the Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2025 – 2030

YWCA Australia thanks you for the opportunity to consult on the development of the Northern Territory government's forthcoming five-year strategy.

We offer our ongoing support toward the development and implementation of the Strategy in the Northern Territory.

Should you have any questions or like to arrange a separate discussion around this email, please reach out to us.

Kind regards,

Bianca