

Submission to the Northern Territory Government Consultation on the Development of a Gender Equality Strategy (2025-2030)

January 2026

Executive Summary

YWCA Australia (YWCA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Northern Territory Government's consultation on the development of a new *Gender Equality Strategy* (2025–2030). We support the signalled shift from a time-limited action plan to a longer-term, adaptive strategy of five years that is intersectional, evidence-informed, measurable, and designed to drive whole-of-government reform.

Our central proposition is clear; ***Gender equality cannot be achieved without housing security.*** In the Northern Territory, gender inequality is not an abstract concept, it is experienced through daily material conditions, particularly the supply, safety and affordability of housing. Housing insecurity and homelessness both reflect and reinforce gender inequality, and they intersect directly with domestic and family violence (DFV), health outcomes, economic participation, educational continuity, and leadership and civic participation. These impacts are most acute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls and are compounded by geographic isolation, entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage, workforce constraints, and high construction and service delivery costs across the Territory.

The *Gender Equality Strategy* (The Strategy) will only succeed if it treats housing as essential infrastructure for gender equality, not simply a downstream outcome. Without safe, secure and affordable housing options, women's safety initiatives will be crisis-driven and incomplete, health interventions will remain reactive, economic security efforts will be undermined by unaffordable living costs driven by high rents and house prices, and leadership initiatives will disproportionately benefit those with stability and resources already in place.

About YWCA

YWCA is working towards a future where young women, women and gender-diverse people experience greater safety, security and wellbeing in their homes and communities. We are a national organisation with a long-standing commitment to intersectional feminism and to supporting women and gender diverse people across the life course.

We are the only national women's community housing provider in Australia, delivering around 130,000 nights of safe and affordable accommodation for women each year through our registered community housing subsidiaries. Across the country, we provide more than 500 safe and affordable homes for women and gender-diverse people, alongside specialist homelessness and family and domestic violence support services.

We also play a role in building the policy and advocacy capability of young women and gender-diverse leaders through national platforms such as our [Young Women's Council](#) and [Digital Activist Community](#). These platforms supporting young women and gender-diverse people to shape policy, influence decision-making, and lead reform on the issues that most affect their lives, including housing insecurity, safety, economic participation, and gender equality.

We advocate for initiatives and policies that take an intersectional and gender-responsive approach to housing, homelessness, and associated support systems. Drawing on frontline service delivery, research, and the lived experience of young women and gender-diverse people, tenants, and clients, YWCA provides governments with practical, solutions-focused insights to support policy design and improved program outcomes.

In the Northern Territory, YWCA is a long-standing government partner delivering crisis accommodation, transitional housing, tenancy support, youth homelessness services, DFV responses, medical accommodation, and lived experience advocacy programs, including [Amplifying Voices](#). The value of Amplifying Voices as a mechanism for lived experience expertise to partner with and inform Government is reflected in the expansion of the Amplifying Voices program to the Lived Experience Advisory Group. YWCA values the partnership with the Northern Territory Government in forming a Lived Experience Advisory Group consisting of diverse members and including experiences of DFV and homelessness to receive training and support and to inform the Government.

Members of YWCA's Amplifying Voices groups are keen to inform the development and implementation of the *Strategy* from the perspective of their lived experience expertise. We convey the recommendations of one Amplifying Voices member towards the Strategy consultation process for the Government to:

- **Recommendation One on Engagement with Community and People with Lived Experience:** *"Act accordingly to the matter when it's presented authentically and thoroughly. What's the issue at hand and the solutions. Actively listening to priority needs in the community. Listen to lived experience."*
- **Recommendation Two on Justice Outcomes and Intergenerational Healing:** *Hold DFV perpetrators accountable, including outside the relationship dynamic such as by siblings, "...so future generations aren't seeing the same repeated cycles and justice is served so women and children can finally heal."*

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

Program Name
Amplifying Voices
Connected Families
Domestic Family Violence Centre (DFVC)
DFVC - National Partnership Agreement
Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes
CASY House
Housing Support Program
Tenancy Sustainability and Support Program
Home Safe NT
Lived Experience and Advocacy Program
Medical Accommodation Program - Barbara James House
Medical Accommodation Program - Dr Helen Phillips Cottage

Drawing on our service delivery footprint and lived experience leadership in the Northern Territory and nationally, as well as our national policy and research partnerships, our advice to Government is grounded in operational realities and practical implementation, particularly what it takes to deliver safe housing and services in a high-cost environment.

Gender Equality in the Northern Territory Context

Gender inequality in the Northern Territory is shaped by intersecting structural conditions including DFV, housing shortages, poverty, geographic isolation, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic racism. These factors do not sit in separate policy boxes, they create compounding pressures in people's lives and across service systems. These pressures uniquely impact and compound upon the lives of women and gender-diverse people in the Northern Territory. A *Strategy* that seeks to address symptoms without grappling with these material conditions risks becoming aspirational rather than operational.

In this context, housing insecurity is both a driver and consequence of inequality. It is a driver because unstable housing increases exposure to violence and reduces pathways to safety, disrupts family functioning, worsens mental health and trauma impacts, and makes it harder to maintain work, study, parenting responsibilities, and social connection. It is a consequence because gendered economic disadvantage, discrimination, caring responsibilities, and violence all increase the likelihood that women will experience housing stress, eviction, "hidden homelessness" or recurrent homelessness.¹

¹ For further commentary on YWCA's previous advice to the Government on matters of gender inequality and homelessness, we refer to our submissions on the Government's [Refreshed Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence \(DFSV\) Reduction Framework](#) and the [Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2025-30](#) both accessible at: <https://www.ywca.org.au/advocacy/publications-news-media/submissions/>

YWCA recognises that we are not an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisation and do not seek to speak on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, communities, or organisations. Our role is to contribute evidence, research, and service delivery insight, including highlighting that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, sistergirls, girls, and gender-diverse people experience gender inequality, housing insecurity, and homelessness at higher rates.

We also strongly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led solutions. Self-determination is essential to achieving effective, culturally safe, and sustainable outcomes, and is central to meeting the Northern Territory Government's commitments under the *Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes* in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

YWCA's Baseline Recommendations for the *Gender Equality Strategy*

As a baseline, we encourage government to address two persistent risks that have limited past efforts in this space:

1. Strengthening service system integration

Where gender equality, DFV, housing, justice, health, and child and family systems are well aligned, women experience coordinated pathways to safety, stability, and independence. Strengthening integration across these portfolios will support more seamless service responses, clearer accountability, and better outcomes, ensuring women and gender-diverse people are supported through connected systems rather than navigating multiple entry points.

2. Embedding strong measurement and delivery discipline

Clear baseline data, targets, investment levers, defined responsibilities, and transparent public reporting provide the foundation for effective implementation. Strengthening these elements will support continuous improvement, enable progress to be tracked over time, and ensure the *Strategy* remains focused on delivering measurable outcomes.

A *Strategy* that centres housing security, embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and lived experience leadership, and is supported by integrated governance and rigorous measurement will be well positioned to deliver sustained, system-wide change for women, gender-diverse people, families, and communities across the Territory.

Purpose and Background

The consultation paper signals a positive and important shift from the *Gender Equality Statement of Commitment and Action Plan 2022–2025* to a broader, and longer-term *Gender Equality Strategy for 2025–2030*, focused on fewer, more adaptable actions and supported by intersectional analysis, data, and measurable outcomes. YWCA strongly supports this direction and welcomes the Government's commitment to developing a more strategic framework for long-term change.

A longer-term *Strategy* of five-years provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen alignment between policy intent, investment decisions, and service delivery. When designed as a practical reform mechanism, such a *Strategy* can support coordinated action across portfolios and ensure that gender equality objectives are reflected in mainstream systems and budgets, where many of the most significant outcomes are shaped.

To maximise its impact, the *Strategy* can build on existing whole-of-government collaboration by operating as a clear lever for reform across Housing, Territory Families, Health, Police, Justice, Education, Treasury, infrastructure and regional development. This approach recognises that gender equality outcomes are created through everyday policy, funding and delivery decisions, and that strong alignment across these agencies is essential to achieving progress.

We recommend the *Strategy* explicitly affirm that:

- gender equality is a shared, whole-of-government responsibility
- major policy and investment decisions are routinely assessed for their impact on women and gender diverse people, such as via the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting principles
- delivery agencies have clearly defined responsibilities for outcomes, supported by transparent public reporting
- lived experience expertise and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership is embedded in decision-making structures, not limited to consultation processes.

To further strengthen accountability and transparency, we also recommend strengthening a dedicated budget accountability mechanism, such as an annual Women's Budget Statement. We acknowledge the steps the Northern Territory Government has taken in applying a gender lens to new initiatives from the 2024 Budget and the associated public fact sheet 'Women in the Territory'. We encourage building upon this as a clear line of sight between *Strategy* objectives and public expenditure, supporting informed decision-making and enabling progress to be tracked over time.

Housing and Supports as Gender Equality Infrastructure

Secure housing is both a fundamental human right and a powerful enabler of gender equality, economic participation, and social wellbeing. When women and gender-diverse people have access to safe, secure, and affordable homes, they are better positioned to participate in the workforce, pursue education and training, care for families, and contribute to their communities.

Women's workforce participation has reached record levels, and women continue to make substantial contributions across all sectors of the economy. At the same time, persistent structural factors, including part-time work patterns, pay gaps, and lower lifetime earnings, continue to shape women's financial security over the life course. Housing affordability plays a central role in this dynamic.

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. We note that the Territory has the highest national rates of both domestic and family violence and homelessness in Australia.

We note that domestic and family violence is the top reason for seeking homelessness services assistance in the Territory, with 81% of that cohort being women.² We also note that almost half of all people experiencing homelessness are under 25 years old with 3,000 young people homeless on any given night.³ This matrix of factors compounds to ballooning housing waiting periods ranging from two to eight or more years depending on location.⁴

Housing costs consume a significant share of many women's incomes, particularly for single-parent households, women leaving violence, and older women. This can constrain opportunities for saving, home ownership, and long-term financial security. Secure and affordable housing can interrupt this cycle, strengthen economic participation and reduce long-term disadvantage. Every dollar invested in women's housing generates social and economic returns, including improved workforce participation and reduced pressure on health and social service systems.

Recognising housing as gender equality infrastructure means recognising its capacity to generate public value. Investment in gender-responsive housing and supports ensure women are able to work, study, and care safely. It improves children's educational stability and outcomes. It strengthens family functioning and community connection. Over time, it reduces intergenerational disadvantage and builds more resilient communities.

² 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.

³ AnglicareNT, (2024), Rental Affordability in the Northern Territory: Snapshot Report 2024.

⁴ 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.

In the context of the Northern Territory, where housing costs and supply constraints are particularly acute, this framing is especially important. Strategic investment in safe and affordable housing, linked with specialist supports, provides the foundation for achieving the overarching objectives of a successful gender equality strategy.

Alignment with Northern Territory Government Priorities

The Northern Territory Government has articulated priorities around safety, economic rebuilding and liveability. A *Gender Equality Strategy* that centres housing security aligns strongly to these priorities because it addresses root causes and reduces downstream system costs.

Reducing Crime

Housing instability is associated with higher exposure to harm and system contact, not because people experiencing homelessness are inherently unsafe, but because housing insecurity increases vulnerability and reduces protective factors. For women and children, secure housing is a key protective factor, supporting safety planning, reducing re-exposure to perpetrators, and enabling regular engagement with services and supports.

A housing-centred gender equality strategy is therefore a practical crime prevention lever. It reduces the conditions that lead to crisis escalation and helps to stabilise families and communities.

Rebuilding the Economy

Investment in housing for women is also a proven driver of economic participation, productivity, and fiscal sustainability. YWCA's forthcoming research, *The Business Case for Investing in Women's Housing*, developed in partnership with the Per Capita Centre for Equitable Housing, provides a robust evidence base for this approach. The research quantifies the social and economic multiplier effects of investing in housing for women and their families, demonstrating that well-designed, gender-responsive housing strengthens workforce participation, supports skills retention, and delivers measurable cost savings across health, justice, and crisis service systems. By reducing recurrent expenditure and enabling sustained economic engagement, investment in women's housing represents a high-impact strategy for rebuilding the Territory's economy and maximising the return on public investment.

Restoring the Territory Lifestyle

A safe, connected, and inclusive community is built when people have access to stable housing, appropriate supports, and genuine pathways to participation. Community wellbeing and liveability are strongest where residents are securely housed, feel a sense of belonging, and are supported to engage positively in civic and social life.

Public confidence and perceptions of safety are shaped less by the presence of people experiencing homelessness, and more by the extent to which communities are supported to meet basic needs and respond early to vulnerability. When women and families have access to safe, affordable housing and integrated supports, risks associated with street-based harm, social isolation, and crisis escalation are significantly reduced.

Restoring and strengthening the Territory lifestyle therefore depends on investing in housing-led responses that prioritise stability, dignity, and inclusion. Creating clear pathways from crisis to long term affordable housing enables women to participate in work and education and contribute to their communities.

By defining “lifestyle” to include housing security, safety, and wellbeing, the Strategy can position itself as a practical framework for building stronger, more resilient communities. ***A Territory in which women and families are securely housed is a Territory that is safer, more connected, and more prosperous for everyone.***

Response to the Consultation Strategy Focus Areas

Community Engagement

YWCA supports strengthening community engagement through culturally safe, place-based and lived experience informed approaches. However, engagement must be meaningfully connected to policy and investment decisions, otherwise it risks creating consultation fatigue, particularly for communities and sectors that are already over-consulted and under-resourced.

Women experiencing housing stress, violence or homelessness are often excluded from government engagement processes because instability makes participation unsafe, impractical, or emotionally costly. Traditional consultation approaches also tend to privilege those with time, transport, stable housing, and confidence in institutional settings.

The *Strategy* should therefore include an engagement model that actively elevates the voices of those most affected by systemic inequality and ensures their perspectives inform decision-making. This means:

- resourcing participation, including remuneration and practical supports
- designing trauma-informed and culturally safe processes
- enabling place-based and non-traditional engagement methods
- ensuring engagement has decision influence, not just advisory status.

Amplifying Voices

YWCA's Amplifying Voices program provides a strong, practice-based model for embedding lived experience expertise into policy design, implementation, and accountability. The program supports people with lived experience of domestic and family violence and related housing insecurity to develop policy capability, engage constructively with decision-makers, and contribute to systems reform. In doing so, it strengthens the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of public policy.

By translating lived experience into informed policy input, Amplifying Voices demonstrates how governments can work in partnership with communities to improve service design, identify unintended impacts, and strengthen accountability. This approach complements and should operate alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led lived experience structures, recognising the importance of self-determination and culturally grounded leadership.

Recommendation

Embed lived experience governance mechanisms within the *Strategy* with a clear mandate, defined decision pathways, and transparent reporting loops. This should include formal partnership with lived experience expertise at YWCA, including through Amplifying Voices as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led equivalents, drawing on their expertise as part of structured consultation, policy development, and ongoing review and implementation processes.

Health and Wellbeing

Housing insecurity is a major determinant of physical and mental health. It increases exposure to stress and trauma, reduces access to preventive healthcare, and can contribute to avoidable emergency department presentations.

From a policy design perspective, the *Strategy* should treat housing as a core health intervention. This is particularly important in the Territory where health systems face sustained pressure and where service access can be challenging due to geography and workforce constraints.

A gender equality strategy that meaningfully addresses health and wellbeing should therefore incorporate:

- housing and homelessness settings
- DFV prevention and response
- trauma-informed service models
- access to culturally safe healthcare, including in remote settings

Recommendation

Position housing security as a key health determinant and require integrated policy and investment between Health, Housing, Territory Families and justice responses.

Safety

Safety and housing are inseparable. We know that domestic and family violence is the number one driver of housing insecurity and homelessness in women and their families. When crisis and transitional accommodation is limited, or when longer-term housing pathways are blocked, victim-survivors face an unacceptable choice between violence and a roof over their head.

This is not a problem that can be solved within one portfolio. It requires systems alignment such as housing supply and pathways to ensure women can stabilise, and funded specialist services to support recovery and tenancy sustainment.

The *Strategy* should explicitly address:

- the violence-homelessness nexus as a core gender equality issue
- the acute need for long-term social and affordable housing that is gender responsive
- the importance of service sustainability, including indexation and stable funding settings

Recommendation

Make “safe housing pathways” a central safety reform, with targets, responsibilities and investment levers across portfolios.

Economic Security

Economic security cannot be achieved without housing security. Housing costs shape whether people can save, absorb shocks, leave unsafe relationships, and remain in employment. In high-cost markets, housing stress functions as a structural tax on women's independence.

The *Strategy*'s economic security work should therefore be designed around the very real constraints that shape women's choices, including housing affordability, childcare and caring responsibilities, workforce flexibility, and pathways back into employment after violence.

A credible economic security agenda should include:

- housing as an economic participation enabler
- pathways that reduce risk when re-entering work, including coordination with income support and housing eligibility settings
- investment logic that recognises long-term productivity gains and reduced service system costs by investing in housing and homelessness supports for women and their families.

Recommendation

Embed gender-responsive budgeting and mandatory gender impact assessments into Cabinet decision-making processes under the new *Strategy*, to ensure that major economic and fiscal decisions are assessed for their effects on women's housing security and financial independence over time.

Leadership and Participation

Leadership initiatives are most effective when they are accessible to women at different stages of stability and life circumstance. Women experiencing housing insecurity bring valuable lived expertise, resilience, and insight into systems that shape community wellbeing. However, participation in leadership, governance, and civic life is often constrained by practical barriers, including safety concerns, time poverty, financial pressure, and the impacts of trauma.

To achieve genuinely inclusive and representative leadership outcomes, the *Strategy* can strengthen participation pathways that recognise the foundational role of safety and stability. This includes resourcing paid participation, childcare and accessibility supports and creating clear pathways that translate lived experience leadership into formal policy, governance, and decision-making roles.

Recommendation

Position stable housing and wraparound supports as enabling foundations for inclusive leadership, and design leadership initiatives that proactively remove practical barriers to participation.

Portfolio Alignment of Gender Equality and DFV

YWCA recognises the Northern Territory Government's strong commitment to advancing gender equality and preventing domestic and family violence, alongside investment in homelessness, housing, health, and social support systems. When these policy and service systems are intentionally aligned, they create more seamless pathways to safety, stability, and economic participation for women and families.

Strengthening coordination across gender equality, homelessness, and DFV portfolios presents an opportunity to maximise the impact of existing investments and ensure that women can move more easily between crisis support, secure housing, recovery, and leadership and workforce participation. Alignment with national frameworks, including the [Working for Women Strategy](#) and the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children](#), can further reinforce shared objectives and accountability.

While the *Strategy* provides an important high-level framework, its effectiveness will be enhanced through clear governance structures, shared outcomes, and integrated implementation mechanisms that support collaboration across portfolios and levels of government.

Recommendation

Embed a machinery-of-government and governance commitment within the *Strategy* that strengthens alignment between gender equality, homelessness, and domestic and family violence policy and services, with shared accountability for outcomes across safety, housing, health, and child and family wellbeing, consistent with national policy commitments.

Governance, Accountability and Measurement

YWCA strongly supports positioning the *Gender Equality Strategy* as a whole-of-government reform framework. A credible accountability architecture should include:

1) Cross-portfolio governance with decision authority

Establish a formal governance arrangement that includes Housing, Territory Families, Health, Justice, Education, Treasury and infrastructure agencies. The governance body should have a clear remit to:

- align policy and investment decisions with gender equality outcomes
- resolve cross-portfolio barriers
- oversee delivery against targets
- monitor system performance indicators.

2) Gender-responsive budgeting and an annual Women's Budget Statement

Introduce rigorous gender-responsive budgeting to create transparency about how mainstream budgets affect gender equality outcomes. An annual Women's Budget Statement is a practical accountability mechanism because it forces the link between *Strategy* intent and investment decisions.

3) A performance framework with gendered housing indicators and housing targets for women and families, which is monitored by sector, community and lived experience expertise

Measurement should include “hard” indicators that reflect material conditions and system performance, including:

- homelessness linked to DFSV
- access to safe and affordable housing pathways
- tenancy sustainment outcomes for women and children
- crisis and transitional accommodation capacity measures
- service demand, turn-away rates, and waiting times where available

The introduction of clear and measurable targets is essential to progressing the Territory’s agenda for gender equality and would build an effectiveness distinct and further from the previous Strategy.

It is critical that the relevant networks are engaged in the design of the *Strategy*, as well as the monitoring of the *Strategy*’s implementation and success. In practice, this is represented by coalitions of sector representatives, community leaders including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and people with lived experience expertise.

These three layers of partnership will support the Government to receive accurate insights into the success of the implementation of the *Strategy*. This will allow the Government to make informed decisions and ‘course corrections’ during the five-year term of the Strategy, and structured opportunities for engagement before the design of the next Strategy beyond 2030.

4) Public reporting and continuous improvement

Annual public reporting should include baseline data, progress against targets, and evaluation findings. Reporting should be designed to enable learning and improvement as *Strategy* implementation progresses.

Pilot Ready Strategy Initiative | Women's Day Centre, Darwin

The Government has the opportunity to introduce a tangible resource through the Strategy to immediately improve the lives and gender-equality outcomes of women in the Territory. This evidence-based initiative proposed by YWCA is a Women's Day Centre in Darwin.

Purpose

To establish a dedicated Women's Day Centre in Darwin that provides a safe, dignified and trauma-informed place for women experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness to access basic amenities, connect with services, and transition into stable housing pathways.

Rationale and argument

Day-time homelessness is a safety issue. Without safe places to go, women face exposure to violence, sexual harassment, health risks, and exploitation. A Women's Day Centre is a practical, preventative investment that reduces street-based harm, improves service engagement, and supports housing transitions.

Intended outcomes (2025–2030)

- Improved safety and wellbeing for women experiencing homelessness
- Increased service engagement and housing pathway uptake
- Reduced street-based harm and crisis escalations
- Improved integration between homelessness, DFSV, health and legal supports.

Delivery partners

YWCA and relevant specialist services (to be determined through commissioning approach)

Key partners

Housing, Health, legal services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led women's services, outreach and homelessness services, local services and referral pathways.

Core service elements

- Safe daytime environment, trauma-informed and culturally safe practice
- Access to amenities such as showers, laundry, lockers, food, rest space
- Case management and housing navigation
- Visiting and co-located services including health, mental health, legal, housing access support
- Supported pathways into social and affordable housing

Implementation steps

- Fund design and establishment, including site selection and operating model
- Establish referral protocols and safety policies
- Implement a monitoring and evaluation framework, including participant feedback
- Review after 12 months and scale

Resourcing and budget levers

To maximise the impact and long-term effectiveness of the Centre, resourcing and funding settings must support both high-quality service delivery and sustainable housing pathways.

This includes:

- Recurrent, indexed operational funding to ensure service stability and workforce retention.
- Commissioning frameworks that enable culturally safe, trauma-informed, and place-based service delivery.
- Dedicated integration funding to support co-location, shared systems, and cross-agency coordination.

A parallel commitment to expanding social and affordable housing supply for women and families, recognising that service outcomes will be constrained without access to appropriate housing.

Without sufficient housing pathways, even the strongest service models risk becoming bottlenecked at crisis and transitional stages, limiting their ability to support recovery, independence, and long-term wellbeing. Partnering with established community housing providers is therefore critical.

This includes working with organisations such as YWCA to deliver new supply, including the proposed 96 social and affordable homes on YWCA-owned land in Darwin, to create viable exit pathways for women and families engaging with the Centre. For further information on the design and support for this initiative, we welcome conversations between our organisation and the Government.

Key Recommendations

YWCA recommends that the Northern Territory *Gender Equality Strategy*:

1. Position housing security as core gender equality infrastructure

Embed safe, secure, and affordable housing as a foundational pillar of the *Strategy*, recognising its role in enabling safety, health, economic participation, and leadership.

2. Strengthen whole-of-government alignment and delivery

Formalise cross-portfolio governance arrangements that align Housing, Health, Territory Families, Justice, Education, Treasury, and infrastructure agencies around shared gender equality outcomes.

3. Return the Gender Equality Unit / Government's Office of Gender Equity and Diversity (OGEAD) to the Department of Children and Families alongside the Domestic and Family Violence Unit

We note that in recent years the Gender Equality Unit / Office of Gender Equity and Diversity was split from the Domestic and Family Violence Unit, with the two Units no longer being in the same Department of the Northern Territory Government.

The Domestic and Family Violence Unit is in the Department of Children and Families whilst the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity sits with the Department of People, Sport and Culture.

We recommend that the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity returns to sitting alongside the Domestic and Family Violence Unit once again in the same Department of Children and Families.

4. Host a Summit to address the dual crises of homelessness and domestic and family violence in the region.

The Summit should be represented by multi-level and cross-government leaders, sector representatives, and people with lived experience – including women, youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

5. Embed gender-responsive budgeting and investment assessment

Integrate gender-responsive budgeting and mandatory gender impact assessments into Cabinet and budget processes, supported by an annual Women's Budget Statement.

6. Invest in integrated housing and support pathways

Expand social and affordable housing supply and specialist homelessness and DFV services, in partnership with community housing providers and service delivery partners, to ensure sustainable pathways from crisis to long term affordable housing for women and their families.

7. Embed lived experience and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led leadership in governance

Establish formal lived experience and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led advisory and governance mechanisms with clear decision pathways and accountability.

8. Resource inclusive and meaningful participation

Fund paid participation, childcare, accessibility, and trauma-informed engagement models to enable women at all stages of stability to contribute to policy and civic leadership.

9. Position housing as a core health and wellbeing intervention

Align housing, health, mental health, and family support policy and investment to strengthen prevention, recovery, and long-term wellbeing outcomes.

10. Make safe housing pathways central to safety reform

Set clear targets, responsibilities, and funding levers to strengthen long-term housing pathways for women and children escaping violence.

11. Strengthen system integration and commissioning settings

Support culturally safe, trauma-informed, and place-based service delivery through integrated commissioning, co-location funding, and shared outcome frameworks.

12. Embed strong measurement, transparency, and continuous improvement

Establish a performance framework with gendered housing and homelessness indicators, public reporting, and evaluation mechanisms.

13. Is informed by meaningful consultation and engagement

A Consultation Paper has been provided for input towards the Gender Equality Strategy. We strongly recommend a second stage of consultation where the Northern Territory Government provides a proposed draft of the Strategy for review and consultation.

14. Establish and resource a Women's Day Centre in Darwin

Invest in a trauma-informed, co-located Women's Day Centre linked to housing pathways and specialist supports.

15. Expand social and affordable housing through strategic partnerships

Partner with experienced community housing providers, including YWCA, to deliver new supply such as the proposed 96 homes in Darwin.

16. Align with national gender equality and safety frameworks

Ensure the Strategy is consistent with the *Working for Women Strategy*, the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children* and *Closing the Gap* commitments.

Concluding Remarks

YWCA stands ready to work in partnership with the Northern Territory Government to support the design and implementation of a *Strategy* that is evidence-informed, measurable, and focused on delivering tangible improvements for women, families, and communities across the Territory. This aligns closely with our organisational mission to realise a future where gender equality is a reality.

For any questions relating to this submission or for any requests for further consultation, please contact YWCA Australia's Advocacy and External Affairs team at: advocacy@ywca.org.au