



Ten-Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy for Victoria

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Statement of Recognition

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. We also acknowledge future aspirations of all First Nations peoples.

Through respectful relationships we will work for the mutual flourishing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

Introduction

The Salvation Army thanks the Victorian Government for the opportunity to share our service delivery experience through contributing to this public consultation to inform the establishment of a 10-year strategy for social and affordable housing in Victoria (the Strategy).

Fundamental to the ethos of The Salvation Army is the idea that every human being has inherent worth and every person should live with dignity. The Salvation Army envisions an Australia where all people have adequate and stable incomes, can afford and sustain housing, and are healthy and connected to community.

This response brings together the experience of our highly qualified and experienced housing, homelessness, family and domestic violence, and youth services staff and managers and the voice of the people who use our services. Our comments have also been informed by engagement with external stakeholders and research, as we advocate on behalf of so many Victorians who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, while faced with critical housing affordability issues.

We acknowledge the significance of the political commitment and financial investment promised to support implementation of the Strategy via the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build. We consider this to be an unprecedented commitment and a significant step to alleviate the chronic shortage of social housing identified in the discussion paper.

Importantly, we also acknowledge the timing of the new Strategy, which coincides with the release of the final report of the Legal and Social Issues Committee *Inquiry into homelessness in Victoria*, the delivery of the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the development of Victoria's first whole-of-government Youth Strategy.

This submission is in four parts:

- **The policy landscape** – discusses the policy considerations that coincide with the release of the 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing in Victoria
- **Growth** – highlights some of the actions required to enable and deliver growth in social housing in Victoria
- **People at the centre** – states that affordable housing must be designed and delivered in a way that is responsive to the needs of different people
- **Pathways** – identifies actions that will enable people to access social housing, sustain their tenancies and move between different options based on their particular needs. This section also recommends features that need to be considered for the development of affordable housing.

The policy landscape

The policy landscape that responds to and ultimately determines housing outcomes and the shape of homelessness in Australia is complex. Policy and funding roles of the Commonwealth and the states and territories mean that responsibilities are often unclear and there are a multitude of intersecting policies and programs funded at the state level. Addressing the social and affordable housing crisis and homelessness in Australia needs all levels of government working together and all programs implemented in concert.

Initiatives such as the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build and development of the 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing Strategy represent significant and long-overdue opportunities at the state level. While outside the scope of this consultation process, the fact is that Commonwealth policy – the rate of income support, the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and funding available under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) – has a huge impact on the effectiveness of state-level policies.

Coinciding with the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build (announced 15 November 2020) and development of Victoria's 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing (announced 21 February 2021), the Victorian Government has also released several other reports and initiatives that are directly relevant to the proposed Strategy and some of the upstream drivers and downstream consequences of homelessness:

- the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (tabled in Parliament 2 March 2021)
- the final report from the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into homelessness in Victoria (tabled in Parliament 4 March 2021)
- the development of a new state-wide whole-of-government Youth Strategy (to be released late 2021).

Each of these substantial policy projects has been informed by extensive stakeholder consultation including input from academics, subject matter experts and research, frontline workers from a range of professional backgrounds, and from people with lived experience. The evidence informing each of these is extensive, yet they deliver mutually consistent findings and recommendations in the main.

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

The Royal Commission attributed the safety, security and belonging of a stable home as fundamental to a person's mental health, enabling them to flourish and not just survive.¹ The recommendations we consider critical to this consultation process are those relating to the interface between mental health and homelessness. These six recommendations, when implemented, will give people who are living with mental illness priority access to housing and support, provide a further 500 new medium-term supported housing places for young people aged between 18 to 25 (in addition to the 2,000 promised under the Big Housing Build), and periodically review the allocation of supported housing homes.

Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

The Legal and Social Issues Committee stated that at the heart of the final report is the belief that the Victorian Government needs to apply a two-pronged approach to remediate homelessness in Victoria by:

- Strengthening early intervention measures to identify individuals at risk and to prevent them from becoming homeless
- Providing more long-term housing for people experiencing homelessness.

The Committee also acknowledged that homelessness cannot be remediated with any single measure — it is complex and multidimensional and often an accumulation of multiple risk factors, including adverse economic, social and personal circumstances. Accordingly, the Committee found it is these structural and personal drivers that need to be the focus of an early intervention strategy for homelessness, which focuses on prevention rather than cure.²

Victoria's first Youth Strategy

Together with similar calls from the Council for Homeless Persons (CHP) and the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVIC) among others, The Salvation Army believes that the development of the new Youth Strategy would benefit from either stand-alone or adjunct commitments to specifically address housing and homelessness for young people as part of a broader, whole-of-government response to meeting the unique needs of young people.

The development of a dedicated housing and homelessness response for young people is one of the key themes identified by The Salvation Army to the 10-Year Strategy for Social and Affordable Housing Strategy (see pages 19 to 21 of this submission).

¹ State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, *Final Report - Volume 2: Collaboration to support good mental health and wellbeing* (2021)

² Legal and Social Issues Committee (Legislative Council), Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria – Final Report* (2021)

Income inadequacy

The Salvation Army has long called for a permanent increase to the JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance. In the light of the expiry of the Coronavirus Supplement, the Commonwealth Government has implemented a permanent increase of \$50 per fortnight to the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance and other related payments. The Salvation Army believes that this increase does not resolve in any way the depths of disadvantage in our country and fails to support a person to meet housing expenses and avoid poverty in general.

Similarly, we consider that Youth Allowance in any of its classifications is not able to meet young people's needs.³ In fact, the number of young people in housing stress has significantly risen over the last few years, arguably as a result of stagnating wages, increasing living expenses, and the increase of work casualisation. Research showed that 1.2 million Australians under the age of 24 were living in poverty. This represents 37 per cent of the total population living in poverty in Australia, estimated at 3.24 million.⁴

The CRA is available to renters in the private rental market and community housing who are receiving a social security payment. Its objective is to prevent even more widespread housing stress and housing affordability issues. A single person paying more than \$156.76 per week in rent can currently receive up to \$70.40 a week in CRA⁵. However, the CRA has not kept pace with increasing rents and household costs. The Productivity Commission found that 29.4 per cent of low-income households receiving CRA at the end of June 2020 still experienced rental stress.⁶ The rate must be increased to minimise housing stress among low-income renters.

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Commonwealth Government's leadership in relation to policy and funding under the current National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (and its predecessors). However, as discussed throughout this submission, the continuing rise in homelessness and falling housing affordability demonstrates that far more needs be done.

Housing that is affordable to those on the lowest incomes, together with the provision of tailored support so individuals can both access and maintain housing, is the foundation of an effective approach to ending homelessness in Australia. In view of the severe and increasing shortage of social housing in every state and territory and a worsening private rental market that is already virtually inaccessible to people on low incomes, The Salvation Army considers that long-term and increased funding through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, in addition to the commitment to significantly grow social housing, is vital to change the current housing affordability and homelessness trajectory.

³ For example, the estimated maximum fortnightly payment from 1 April 2021 for a single young person with children will be \$656

⁴ Davidson, P., Saunders, P., Bradbury, B. & Wong, W., ACOSS/ UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report, Sydney: ACOSS., *Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 1, Overview* (2020)

⁵ Services Australia, *Rent Assistance – How much you can get* (2020). Available at <www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance/how-much-you-can-get>

⁶ Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2021* (2021)

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government continues to strengthen community-based supports, while increasing the amount of supported housing options available to Victorians experiencing homelessness and mental illness.
- The Victorian Government implements in full the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria within the context of other relevant policy initiatives that intersect with social and affordable housing and homelessness.
- The Victorian Government works with the Commonwealth Government to address the systemic causes of homelessness, including the inadequacy of payments, allowances and supplements such as the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Growth

For many people who come to The Salvation Army for support, social housing plays a critical role in an increasingly unaffordable and insecure housing market. We also know that social housing is the most effective exit point for many people experiencing homelessness and offers vital support to other vulnerable groups, such as women and children escaping violence and young people experiencing disadvantage.

Victoria has the lowest social housing stock (3.42 per cent in 2019-20) in Australia and is significantly below the national average of 4.5 per cent of total housing stock. For Victoria to reach the national average, it needs to build 3,400 new social housing dwellings per year until 2036.⁷

We welcome the Victorian Government's announcement in November 2020 of the Big Housing Build Program. We share the government's vision that the delivery of 12,000 new dwellings in Victoria (9,300 social housing dwellings and 2,900 affordable housing units) will begin to alleviate the current demand pressure in the social housing system. The continuous undersupply of available social housing has meant that individuals, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable cohorts, are having significant trouble accessing much needed housing and comprehensive support.

The Salvation Army believes that the development of any housing strategy in Victoria should address the shortfall of affordable housing and social housing as the single greatest challenge for housing in the state. Therefore, we recommend that increasing the social housing stock (both public and community housing), both in the short and long term, must be included as one of the pillars of the Victorian Housing Strategy going forward, in addition to the proposed investment in renewal refurbishment and significant upgrades.

The social housing deficit has led to a chronic shortage of available transitional housing options and crisis accommodation centres across the state. It has been noted that as a result of the low vacancy rate in the social housing system, the number of clients transitioning from these short-term temporary accommodation options into long-term accommodation (public and community housing) has stagnated. This housing bottleneck combined with the increasing demand for these 'transitional' services has been highlighted by our service streams as one of the most urgent issues that the Victorian Housing Strategy should address.

⁷ Legal and Social Issues Committee (Legislative Council), Parliament of Victoria, *Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria – Final Report* (2021)

While The Salvation Army believes that Housing First approaches should underpin the homelessness response and social housing allocation policy across Australia, we understand that this requires a supply of social housing that is sufficient to meet demand. Despite the significant and very much welcome scale of the Big Housing Build, neither the immediate nor foreseeable social housing supply will meet demand for many years.

Similarly, it will likely take many years and rolling budget commitments before there is adequate flow within the social housing system and capacity to deliver Housing First programs at scale. Therefore, in the shorter term, we consider that an increase in the stock of transitional housing and crisis accommodation centres is also necessary – particularly in regions where there are no such crisis options. This will contribute towards the purpose of supporting more people until they can exit into long-term and stable housing. In the case of our family and domestic violence services, transitional housing has proven to be effective in helping women whose situations involve child protection because there is a continuity in case management, care and placement.

As addressed elsewhere in this submission, new social housing units in Victoria need to be well-located (near transport, jobs and services), safe and healthy (dwellings must be quality built, energy efficient, and universally accessible) and focused on meeting priority and under-serviced cohorts and their needs, such as additional single people, large family units and older women. Furthermore, as part of the objective of increasing social housing stock in Victoria, The Salvation Army proposes the following solutions for the Victorian Government's consideration as part of strategy development:

- **Replace the current ad-hoc process with an ongoing funding program for community housing** so providers can have 'shovel-ready' projects to apply for available funds. The ad-hoc nature of current funding and the fact that other sources of revenue (for example, rental assistance, rental payments) are capped means that the sector cannot develop the capacity and capability required to continue growing. There needs to be more certainty when future funding rounds will be offered.
- **Simplify the application process and extend timelines** where the capacity for responding to new funding opportunities may be limited.
- **Review how rental payments are collected** through social and affordable housing to make it sustainable for providers to build and maintain housing, while also increasing their stock.
- **Introduce mandatory inclusionary zoning**, which would see developers compelled to include social and/or affordable housing in their projects. This should include a transparency and accountability framework that defines how social and affordable housing will be apportioned in new developments. There are currently no mechanisms in place to engage with developers to make sure a portion of their development is affordable.

- **Provide discounted rates to incentivise not-for-profit organisations to invest in housing**, where low rental returns, maintenance costs, rates and taxes can be prohibitive.
- **Provide better access to information about the availability of land** and whether infrastructure developments are already in place or proposed for the future.
- **Provide adequate funding for community housing providers** to develop housing in regional communities where they do not have a current presence and the costs incurred for travel can be prohibitive.
- **Consider whether existing properties that have space in the surrounding land could adopt the concept of ‘barnacle-ing’**, where the building is designed with the ability to attach pieces to the existing structure as families expand. Vancouver has had success with this concept, which allows for additional density in exchange for retaining the existing structure. The habitable square footage can sometimes be increased by a considerable percentage.

Our staff also highlighted the need to improve the identification of clients or cohorts in need through sector data and the Victorian Housing Register in a transparent manner. This will enable community housing providers to plan and deliver services more strategically and in line with identified needs (for example, number of bedrooms, single occupant or families, type of dwelling based on mobility, and type of dwelling based on program requirements). Currently, data for client cohorts is fragmented between sectors, not necessarily in alignment nor easily available.

The Salvation Army believes that the Victorian Government can supply land on a temporary basis for crisis and short-term accommodation, such as in transport corridors which are not slated for development for several years. Greater access to information about available land and planning timeframes would assist organisations that do have the means to provide temporary housing structures to set up emergency accommodation and allow for people to remain in their communities while they reconstruct. This could include modular ‘prefab’ homes and other temporary housing designs.

A searchable register of local and state government land suitable for short to medium-term housing would allow for a swifter and more efficient establishment of temporary housing in communities and ensure that recovery is less disruptive for families and the community.

Finally, it is proposed that the government works with the sector to determine a clear role for the community housing sector in the provision of affordable housing. We consider that further policy work is required to articulate the role state government and the community housing sector should have in affordable housing, both in terms of rental and ownership.

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government commits to an ongoing funding program for community housing to provide certainty.
- The Strategy seeks to address the bottlenecks in transitional housing due to the lack of exit points, including into social housing.
- The Victorian Government undertakes a review of rental collection in community housing.
- The Victorian Government introduces mandatory inclusionary zoning, including transparency and accountability frameworks.
- The Victorian Government provides not-for-profit organisations with discounted rates to incentivise investment in housing, where low rental returns, maintenance costs, rates and taxes can be prohibitive.
- The Victorian Government provides better access to information about the availability of land.
- The Victorian Government provides adequate funding for community housing providers to develop housing in regional communities.
- The Victorian Government provides transparent data from the Victorian Housing Register and housing sector to allow community housing providers to meet identified needs.
- The Victorian Government makes available a searchable register of local and state government land suitable for short to medium-term housing.
- The Victorian Government works with the community housing sector to define clear roles in the provision of affordable housing.

Salvation Army Housing (Victoria)

Salvation Army Housing (Victoria) (SAHV) is a community housing organisation that provides homes for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, people on low incomes and people with specific support needs.

A significant proportion of SAHV properties are in the Transitional Housing Management Program (THM). There are a number of tenancies in the Long-Term Housing Program and the Rooming House Program.

SAHV is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered charity and a public company limited by guarantee, established under the auspices of The Salvation Army to address the needs and housing requirements of people at all stages of life. This includes early intervention to avoid a slide into homelessness, emergency accommodation and crisis response, transition to more stable accommodation and supporting a move to independence.

SAHV had its origins as The Salvation Army Red Shield Housing Victoria in 2008 and became a registered housing provider in 2009 in response to regulatory requirements of the Victorian Housing Registrar. The Salvation Army later developed a social housing strategy which recognised our potential to address the needs of people at all stages of the entry and support continuum and in 2015, established SAHV as a separate entity along with Salvation Army Housing and Salvos Housing.

Following the bringing together of the two former Salvation Army territories into a unified Australia Territory on 1 December 2018, SAHV with its presence throughout Victoria, is coming together with Salvation Army Housing, which operates in SA, NT, WA and Tasmania as well as Salvos Housing with its presence in NSW, Queensland and ACT to act collaboratively as a national organisation headquartered in Melbourne.

SAHV currently operates the following properties in Victoria, managing over 1000 tenancies every year:

- Transitional Housing – 612 properties (647 tenancies)
- Crisis Accommodation – 60 properties (63 tenancies)
- Rooming House – 9 properties (120 tenancies)
- Long-Term Housing – 172 properties (189 tenancies)

People at the centre

The Salvation Army shares the Victorian Government's vision that social and affordable housing must be designed and delivered in a way that is responsive to the needs of different people. This vision must be reflected in the Strategy.

Cohorts

Access to appropriate, affordable and secure housing is the foundation of any family or individual's engagement in work, education and community. The Salvation Army considers that there is a need for an integrated and holistic approach when developing social policy. Such an approach should aim to improve housing and quality of life in general, given the mix of service provision requirements for people with different needs. Therefore, the development of a social and affordable housing strategy should provide critical consideration of different cohorts impacted by housing unaffordability and homelessness, and their varying support needs.

As highlighted throughout this submission, the lack of affordable housing options remains the single most critical factor leading to homelessness and social disengagement for individuals and communities. Our evidence reaffirms that, for the following cohorts, affordable and suitable housing is urgently required, in concert with tailored and flexible support that meets their individual needs:

- People who are sleeping rough
- Women aged over 55
- Women and children impacted by family and domestic violence
- People exiting institutions (young people leaving state care, people exiting prison, and people exiting hospitals)
- People seeking asylum
- People of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent
- Veterans
- Women with children coming out of divorce
- Mothers and/or fathers who have lost employment
- Survivors of modern slavery
- Individuals with disability
- Individuals with mental health concerns (including substance use disorders)
- Young people (see the Youth section of this submission).

Through our work with our clients, we identify deep and complex intersections of different risk factors and vulnerabilities within different cohorts, while recognising that personal, social, structural and economic factors often overlap and interact with each other. For all these cohorts, a range of co-occurring presenting issues are increasing, both in terms of prevalence and complexity.

In the case of women escaping from family violence, our staff has indicated that victim-survivors who do not have a permanent residency or citizenship are particularly vulnerable because it is very difficult for them to move out of transitional accommodation as they have no source of income. In many cases, victim-survivors end up returning to the perpetrator. For other women, the different systems that are intended to support them can fail when they do not consider their individual circumstances.

Kristine's Story*

Kristine* had experienced family violence for the past seven years and as a result of the trauma, has significant mental health concerns. Due to the continued abuse and threats to her life, Kristine sought support and was placed in a refuge. Kristine did not take her children with her as she assumed that when the police and child protection became involved the next day, her children would be returned to her safely without the perpetrator stopping them.

However, child protection determined that the children should remain with the perpetrator. He had convinced them that he was the safe parent and that Kristine's mental health impacted on her ability to take care of the children.

Child protection would allow for Kristine to have the children only if she was able to move into stable accommodation. Kristine had no source of income and was not entitled to additional support through Centrelink as she did not have the children in her care. This meant that Kristine could not afford a two-bedroom property.

Kristine was not able to have her children with her for over four months and they were only able to meet at a park once a week. This further affected her bond with her children, which was already impacted by the perpetrator's influence and control. After four months Kristine decided to return back to the perpetrator for the sake of her children as she realised that she would never be able to gain custody and care of her children.

* Name has been changed

Similarly, The Salvation Army has growing concerns about increasing homelessness and housing unaffordability among women aged over 55. Our staff estimates that there will be unprecedented increasing demand for our services from women belonging to this cohort, who have either left family violence or do not have secure housing, and do not have an established career or stable source of income for a variety of reasons. We know that this cohort makes up a large proportion of people in insecure housing (primarily couch surfing and living in caravans) but are often invisible to support services as they do not seek support as readily as rough sleepers.

Emma's Story*

Emma* entered a Salvation Army service after spending several months living rough. She was a victim-survivor of domestic violence who escaped with her only friend, her dog Tasha*. During the time Emma was living rough Tasha continued by her side day and night. Tasha not only acted in the capacity of friend and confidante but as protector and guard at night.

When Emma first entered the service we were not able to immediately find appropriate accommodation but arranged for Tasha to stay with the RSPCA's boarding program temporarily while Emma stayed with our service. This created a huge amount of stress and anxiety for Emma. So much so that she chose to leave the service in the middle of the night to sleep outside the RSPCA and then return in the morning.

As soon as possible we were able to negotiate with a community housing provider to provide accommodation for both Emma and Tasha but the stress and anxiety of the separation would not have been necessary if there had been sufficient appropriate housing options available at the time.

*All names changed

Homelessness and the intersection with complex needs

Although there is no single root cause that leads to a person becoming homeless, the existence of strong links between homelessness, other social vulnerability factors and structural causes have been well established. Our staff have also highlighted several other factors impacting people experiencing homelessness that arise as a direct result of government policy, or that require changes in government policy, funding and practice for improved outcomes.

In our view, it is critical that any policy response is informed by a thorough and sensitive consideration of how people with multiple or complex needs would interact with the system. This involves recognising that people are complex beings and possess multiple and often interconnected characteristics. This also means that people can (and often do) belong to more than one client cohort group.

Some of the elements that need to be considered in developing policy and practice are:

- Trauma – traumatic events often occur as a precursor to becoming homeless, with many people leaving home to avoid ongoing trauma in the form of assault, child abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence. Service systems are not always equipped with the necessary tools or the right responses to help people who have a history of trauma. Often this lack of understanding of the impact of trauma can prevent homelessness services from being effective.⁸
- Alcohol and other drug-related issues – there is a strong association between problematic alcohol or other drug use and experiences of homelessness.⁹ Research from homelessness services in Melbourne shows that 43 per cent of the homeless population reported that they had alcohol and other drug use problems. Of these, one-third reported that they had these problems prior to becoming homeless, with the remaining two-thirds reporting that they had developed them following homelessness.¹⁰
- Deinstitutionalisation – the deinstitutionalisation policies of the 1980's were predicated on the assumption that people with psychosocial disability living in the community would have adequate access to social housing, employment, income, clinical services and psychosocial support. As stated in the Productivity Commission's October 2019 *Mental Health Draft Report Volume 1*, many people became homeless or vulnerable to living in unsuitable housing situations as a result of deinstitutionalisation.¹¹ Sadly, the experience of mental illness and related disability today is frequently a fast track to deep and permanent poverty. Living with psychosocial disability too often means reduced access to employment, and income at poverty levels. Consequently, many people living with psychosocial disability cycle in and out of homelessness.¹²
- Mental ill-health – suitable housing (housing that is secure, affordable, of reasonable quality and of enduring tenure) is particularly important in preventing mental ill-health and is a first step in promoting long-term recovery for people experiencing mental illness.¹³ Unfortunately, around 16 per cent of people with mental illness live in unsuitable accommodation (for example, homelessness, at risk of eviction, in overcrowded housing or housing of substandard quality).¹⁴ Research shows that people living with mental health issues are more likely to experience homelessness and that

⁸ European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, *Recognising the link between trauma and homelessness* (2017)

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia* (2019)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Productivity Commission, *Mental Health, Draft Report*, (2019)

¹² Smith, J., *Introduction; Mental Health, Disability and Homelessness* (2018)

¹³ Productivity Commission, *Mental Health, Draft Report* (2019).

¹⁴ Ibid



people with severe mental illness are more likely to experience higher housing stress and live in unstable housing compared to all people with a mental health issue.¹⁵

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government critically considers different cohorts impacted by housing unaffordability and homelessness, and their varying support needs in the development of a social and affordable housing strategy.
- The Victorian Government equips housing and support services with tools and resources to recognise and effectively respond to the deep and complex individual risk factors experienced among different client cohorts.
- The Victorian Government designs policies and systems that encourage and facilitate better linkages and cooperation between different social service providers.
- The Victorian Government ensures people without permanent residency or citizenship (particularly those without work rights) can access housing and other services until their visa status is resolved.
- The Victorian Government acknowledges and plans for a continued unprecedented and increasing demand for housing and support services by women over 55.
- The Victorian Government ensures social and affordable housing is built, located, and makes adequate policy provision for pets.
- The Strategy recognises the intersection with multiple and complex needs, including needs arising from past trauma, alcohol and other drug-related issues, deinstitutionalisation and mental health.

¹⁵ Smith, J., *Introduction: Mental Health, Disability and Homelessness* (2018); Kubanek, C., *Specialist homelessness services clients with mental health issues* (2018). Article in Parity, available at <www.search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.000210667500427>, viewed 7 April 2021

The Salvation Army's Youth Services (Social Mission)

The rallying cry of our Salvation Army Youth Services is “young people achieving their full potential”.

The Salvation Army Youth Services offer an integrated suite of targeted programs that engage with young people across Victoria (and Australia) on their journey to independence. These programs create intentional avenues for young people to explore opportunities, build support networks, and access, participate in and contribute to their communities.

In Victoria, The Salvation Army Youth Services Stream supported a total of 1,793 young clients throughout 2020. We have approximately 120 staff, who deliver youth services and programs that focus on youth housing and homelessness, education, training and employment, youth justice support and a range of therapeutic programs. With around \$12 million of government funding, we operate from five key social program centres:

- Melbourne Metro – St Kilda / Richmond / Fitzroy
- Peninsula – Frankston / Rosebud / Hastings
- North West – Sunshine / Brimbank Melton / Coburg and surrounds
- North-Eastern Victoria – Shepparton and Wodonga
- Leongatha / Gippsland.

We also have smaller youth activity centres in Box Hill, Ballarat and Geelong.

A very significant part of our work and program expertise is in supporting young people in Victoria who experience:

- Homelessness
- Co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drug issues
- Family and domestic violence
- Family breakdown
- Cultural and community exclusion, including LGBTQI+ young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and young people with disability
- Involvement with the child protection system
- Disengagement from education.

The Salvation Army's youth services are committed to service delivery and a workplace environment that demonstrates and promotes the principles of equity and social justice within a rights-based framework. We actively work to encourage and remove barriers to participation, thereby ensuring equitable access to services and opportunities. We seek to ensure that our services achieve enduring and successful outcomes for everyone, regardless of their background or need.

Young people

As outlined above, there are numerous cohorts who are already experiencing homelessness or who are at particular risk of homelessness due to a combination of structural factors, affordability issues and individual circumstances. While each of these groups need to have housing and support responses that are appropriate to their collective and individual needs, The Salvation Army has identified young people as a cohort for whom dedicated housing, homelessness and support responses need to be developed. The needs of the various cohorts of young people are unique and not well-suited to being addressed through more generic housing and homelessness systems that have historically been geared towards adults. Homelessness research has consistently identified young people as having different needs and presenting issues to those of adults experiencing homelessness.¹⁶

The burden of homelessness falls disproportionately on young Australians. While people aged 12 to 24 years make up just under 20 per cent of the Australian population, they comprise 25 per cent of individuals experiencing homelessness.¹⁷ Significantly, the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) has also reported that young people experiencing homelessness on their own represent just over half (54 per cent) of all single people who seek help from homelessness services, but they are only 2.9 per cent of principal tenants in social housing in Australia.¹⁸

Staff from across Salvation Army housing, homelessness, family and domestic violence, and youth services concur that young people experience homelessness differently to adults. As they are not usually developmentally ready to fully control the circumstances of their own health, safety and positive development, young people need specialised and tailored care and support, together with housing that is appropriate to their trajectory.

Adult-focussed services such as emergency shelter and transitional housing options are predicated on an assumption of independence, with case management that assumes that people need a brief period of support to resolve a momentary crisis rather than guidance and support to understand their own needs, set goals, and attain those goals in the future.

Homelessness can affect children and young people in many ways. For a child experiencing homelessness, it can become increasingly difficult to stay engaged in education, with the increased likelihood of developing academic and learning delays, absenteeism or leaving school early. They also tend to experience emotional isolation and difficulty relating to their peers, along with difficulties making and keeping friends. Most importantly, experiencing homelessness has an impact on both the physical and mental health of children.¹⁹

¹⁶ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *Evidence for improving access to homelessness services* (2011)

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness* (2018); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Housing Assistance in Australia* (2018)

¹⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Housing Assistance in Australia* (2018)

¹⁹ Homelessness Australia, *Homelessness and Children* (2016)

The Salvation Army also finds that many young people struggle to engage with services. This is because there are numerous barriers that limit service engagement, including lack of awareness of services, stigma or shame around seeking help, poor motivation for treatment, fear that their needs will not be met, reliance on informal supports, peer pressure, lack of support for treatment, concerns about confidentiality, trust and anonymity, negative past experiences with services, limited treatment options, treatment cost, and waiting lists.

Though early intervention services are a key circuit breaker that prevent trajectories into entrenched homelessness, current approaches and systems mean that early intervention is not routinely offered to young people and families. More comprehensive availability of services and linkages between services would:

- Address family conflict and support families to stay together where it is safe to do so
- Maintain family connection even if the young person can no longer reside at home
- Stabilise all areas of a young person's life, including housing and connections to education, training and employment
- Equip a young person with the supports and skills to avoid common risks associated with homelessness, including involvement with the justice system, educational disengagement, ongoing health problems, teenage pregnancy and being a young parent, and long-term welfare dependency.

The Salvation Army's frontline staff also reported:

- Not all young people are able to safely return to family due to violence, sexual assault and neglect. The homelessness service system needs to be resourced to provide crisis, support and other housing options where this is the case.
- Real estate agents and landlords in the private rental market have been known to discriminate against young people.
- The current business model of mainstream social housing means that providers are often reluctant to accept young residents because of their low and insecure incomes, and because they are regarded as high-risk tenants.
- For some young people, shared housing is the only realistic option, however this requires networking or social skills that young people do not always have.
- Maintaining young people in schooling to minimise disruption to their learning outcomes is a well-known protective factor that minimises welfare dependence in later life.
- The flow of young people into homelessness can be dramatically reduced by ensuring that there are measures in place to address their needs at all crucial stages in their lives.

- Young people require access to a range of accommodation and support services as they grow and develop skills to live independently. Young people experiencing homelessness often lack access to family support and networks, compounding the need for crisis and transitional housing models.
- Young people transitioning out of state care, the youth justice system and the disability systems disproportionately experience, and are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.
- We need a continuum of support that acknowledges many young people need long-term and high-intensity support.
- Key targets and resources are required to integrate service delivery responses across the child protection, youth justice, disability and youth homelessness support sectors, with a goal of ending youth homelessness.

A national strategy to end youth homelessness

There is a consensus across the sectors involved with youth homelessness that strategic action is needed to make a significant and measurable difference in the years to come.

In March 2019 the National Youth Homelessness Conference issued a communiqué that called for a National Strategy Plan for Ending Youth Homelessness, and highlighted four key areas for strategic action – early intervention, rapid re-housing, engagement with education, training and employment opportunities, and extended state care.

Supported by The Salvation Army, the 2021 National Youth Homelessness Conference (15-16 June 2021) will be organised around the development of this strategy, with conference discussions and post-conference actions leading to a joint NGO sector-Government taskforce and consultation process. It is hoped the strategy will serve as a platform to inform state and territory government planning and action to address youth homelessness.

Recommendation

- In recognition of the unique circumstances and needs of young people, the Victorian Government develops a stand-alone strategy (or adjunct to the new Youth Strategy) to address housing-related issues and homelessness among young people.

Pathways

Prevention and early intervention

Prevention and early intervention are perhaps the most important areas of focus in our goal to address homelessness. These are services and initiatives that are effective in arresting homelessness before it takes hold and causes greater and more complex problems that then become increasingly difficult to manage as they escalate. Research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) has found that many early intervention strategies can be implemented quickly and cost-effectively by stabilising people in their existing tenancy and avoiding evictions. There is considerable scope to increase and improve early intervention to provide more secure housing, and to achieve better mental health outcomes for people at risk of homelessness.²⁰

There is also abundant evidence that getting people into housing as quickly as possible is an effective measure to address homelessness while also preventing the myriad of problems associated with being homeless from escalating. These rapid re-housing approaches, which are premised on the 'Housing First' philosophy, provide that once people are in secure housing, they can start addressing the issues that have contributed to their homelessness.²¹

Other early intervention initiatives include providing rent subsidies to help people secure housing and support to maintain the tenancy.

Recommendations

- The Strategy commits to increase access to rapid re-housing approaches.
- The Strategy prioritises early intervention and prevention initiatives.
- The Strategy ensures the important role of rent subsidies and support to maintain tenancies.

Support

Alongside the availability of appropriate affordable housing itself and effective prevention and early intervention initiatives to turn off the tap, the provision of support services represents a further priority in effectively responding to homelessness, helping people maintain tenancies once housed and providing opportunities for people to thrive. While the types of support may be

²⁰ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *Housing, homelessness and mental health: towards systems change* (2018)

²¹ Council to Homeless Persons, *Early intervention the key to ending homelessness* (2014)

diverse, Salvation Army frontline staff maintain the importance of a number of characteristics in any form of support.

These include that support should be:

- Tailored to the individual needs of the individual
- Flexible, in acknowledgement of varying complexity
- Client-centred
- Available for the duration of need (and not the convenience of data collection and funding arrangements).

In particular, staff stressed that a three-month support duration is often insufficient to address clients' housing issues, particularly if these are complex and occurring within the context of an increasingly constrained and unaffordable housing market. Support periods should be responsive to current and emerging trends rather than being limited by the circumstances that informed the historical 13-week support duration. Greater flexibility of support would lead to improved housing outcomes. Increased flexibility that is informed by individual need would also ensure a person-centred approach to service delivery and ensure less people are excluded because they fall outside program guidelines.

Recommendation

- The provision of appropriate support services for the duration of need is recognised as foundational for people to thrive and maintain their tenancies.

Carers of dependents with a disability – Linda’s* story

Linda* is a 43-year-old Aboriginal woman with a 21-year-old son with severe autism for whom she is the sole primary full-time caregiver. She had been a victim of family violence for many years and in 2020 made the brave decision to leave the abusive relationship with her son. Linda reached out to the family violence intake service and it was quickly established that she was not eligible for refuge accommodation due to her care commitments. Her son’s gender, age and disability were all contributing factors in the decision. The only support that she could access was temporary motel accommodation.

Linda ended up having to ‘couch surf’ with some friends and got in contact with the Aboriginal Women’s Legal Service until she was in a position to return to her home with her son. This process took some months to achieve and was disruptive to his education and support activities.

During this time, her son experienced serious anxiety arising from his dislocation from his familiar home environment, which is essential for his sense of safety and stability. Consequently, his anxiety saw an increase in unsettled and distressed behaviour and at times, physical and emotional outbursts.

Linda has stated that it was not just about her son not being in his own home, but the impact of multiple moves due to a lack of safe and stable accommodation during this period. She said that she was shocked and dismayed that her care responsibilities meant she was unable to access the specialist crisis family violence services that she needed during a critical time of leaving violence. She said there were no facilities or accommodation resources available to meet her needs and the special needs of her son.

Linda was offered and provided with family violence case management, which she found helpful when eventually able to return to her home with her son.

*Name changed

Transitional Housing

Transitional Housing (THM) was originally intended as a supported short-term accommodation program that acts as a stepping stone to more permanent housing in public housing, community housing or the private rental market. The Salvation Army has identified the following issues and concerns about its functionality:

- THM is rarely available due to high demand and competition between family violence and homelessness services for scarce properties.
- Intended as a short to medium-term accommodation option, THMs are part of the bottleneck between crisis responses and permanent housing. Our experience is that if a family manages to secure transitional housing, they are unable to transition on to permanent housing due to long social housing wait lists. It can often take up to two years to move from THM to social housing.
- While the tenancy services and accommodation itself are appropriate, the THM operating model was designed for adults and does not provide the support required for young people to achieve independence. As mentioned above, many young people need comprehensive support to change their life trajectory, including to address addictions, build relationships, and develop life skills.

We need more Transitional Housing. There was a government initiative called 'A Place to Call Home' - this was a transitional house that eventually turned into that person's forever home and became public housing.

This program supported complex families into long-term housing (with very positive outcomes). Instead of going to a refuge, families and individuals experiencing homelessness will move directly into this housing and receive tenancy and other support for the first 12 months. They will not have to leave the housing at the end of the support period. The housing will be transferred to the general public housing pool and their tenancy extended in accordance with normal tenancy arrangements for public housing.

The program was funded by the Commonwealth in 2014 and aimed to reduce the number of homeless people turned away from homeless shelters each year and lead to improved success in reintegrating people with the broader community. It also assisted in reducing the likelihood of their cycling in and out of homelessness services."

(Salvos Family and Domestic Violence Worker)

Performance measurement

In discussing the rather vexed proposition that it is either common or expected that people would pass through social and affordable housing to the private market, a number of perspectives were provided from the different vantage points of Salvation Army homelessness and community housing stakeholders.

These perspectives should also be prefaced by acknowledging that by far the majority of our experience is in working with individuals and cohorts that are often the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

From a community housing perspective, it was noted that:

- Salvation Army Housing clients do not tend to move on and housing is mainly required for life, for example for older women, people experiencing mental health issues etc.
- The private rental market is still too expensive even with some employment.
- Clients may wish to move between social housing properties, however the current system does not currently have the processes or capacity to facilitate this.

Our housing services have also highlighted that the Strategy should also enhance a better understanding of the social impact of the community housing sector. The current key performance measures (KPMs) only measure a provider's outputs regarding the physical property, which leads to a primary focus on business management rather than the wellbeing of clients.

We support the notion that measuring outcomes, rather than outputs, would help community housing organisations to make decisions about how to design and deliver services based on the needs and experiences of tenants.²² Furthermore, a set of tenant wellbeing outcomes and measures would enable consistent and robust measurement and aggregation across the sector to support learning and advocacy.²³ For example, as a mission-driven organisation working towards transforming lives, The Salvation Army proposes that a more appropriate measure of success for social housing is not how many people exit, but how many people are equipped to live a more fulfilling life. In particular, the expectation that people move on from social housing should be challenged, particularly when mainstream housing remains unaffordable. A further measure of success could be a reduction in the need for support.

²² Community Housing Industry Association Victoria, *Through Tenant Eyes: Measuring: The Social Impact of Community Housing – Sector Outcomes Framework* (2019)

²³ Ibid

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government acknowledges that it is often an unrealistic goal for people to move on from social housing to the critically unaffordable housing market. This is particularly true for people experiencing significant disadvantage or people with complex needs.
- The Strategy acknowledges that the current key performance measures (KPMs) for community housing organisations measure output and that outcomes measurement would be a more effective means to measure the social impact of the sector. Alternative social housing outcome measures could include a reduction in the need for support or better quality of life.

Affordable housing issues and features

The current housing system fails to meet the housing needs of low-income households and exacerbates the harms to individuals and communities arising from housing insecurity, the inability to access affordable housing and ultimately, homelessness.

The Salvation Army has identified several key themes for consideration within the context of pathways.

Unpublished preliminary findings from a survey of 955 individuals who accessed The Salvation Army's Emergency Relief services between November 2020 and January 2021 revealed that 93 per cent of respondents were experiencing housing stress (that is, spending more than 30 per cent of their household income on housing). Of these, 86 per cent were experiencing extreme housing stress (that is, spending more than 50 per cent of their household income on housing) and 43 per cent indicated that their housing costs exceeded their household income.

There is no single solution to addressing housing affordability. Interventions across the housing continuum are required to provide relief to various cohorts in different parts of the market. The Salvation Army believes the most pressing need is for solutions that focus on people experiencing the most disadvantage. These need to be tailored for people who are not likely to ever consider home ownership and for whom even private rental remains elusive for a variety of reasons, including affordability and the support needs required to maintain a tenancy.

For those with greater independence, or those just needing a hand up at certain times in their lives, improved and flexible rental choices would go some way to meeting both housing and affordability needs. These options may include growing private rental support programs or investigating new rent-to-buy schemes, where these do not risk further reducing the availability of social housing stock.

It is also important to ensure that affordable housing is environmentally sustainable and energy efficient. In 2017-18, a five-year analysis of more than 12,000 people who accessed The Salvation Army's Moneycare financial counselling services showed that one in six people experienced energy stress. An energy efficient home not only reduces the cost of heating and cooling but can also have significant benefits for physical and mental health.

Affordability also has implications for community housing providers such as The Salvation Army, where financial viability remains a consideration within the context of marginal returns on tenancies (sometimes around 2 per cent). This is the result of available capital funding for new stock being provided at around 50 per cent (excluding land).

Furthermore, we consider that the Strategy should also explore how more private housing can be introduced into the system, for example, via a supplement or a tailored rental subsidy scheme (similar to the Commonwealth Rental Assistance program) that sees its eligibility extended beyond people receiving a social security payment.

Features of affordable housing are not restricted to providing a range of housing types, tenure options or locations. One size does not fit all. Therefore, The Salvation Army believes that the Strategy must include critical consideration of the different cohorts impacted by housing affordability and homelessness and their varying support needs (for example, youth operate well in shared accommodation, but older single women need independent living).

For each of the different cohorts, affordable housing is not only appropriate but required, in addition to tailored and flexible support that meets the needs of the individual for the duration of need. This means that the Strategy must reflect the voice of those living the experience of homelessness or the fragile situation of crisis and transitional housing, in relation to the type of affordable housing that needs to be built in Victoria.

Difficulties for older women securing housing with secure tenure and affordability



“Homelessness for older women is typically different to older men. Lifelong social and economic disadvantage resulting in income and employment inequality is a major factor. Relationship breakdown, family illness, caring responsibilities and misadventure, in isolation or in a combination, also place older women at risk of homelessness, which often happens quite suddenly and unexpectedly” – Older Women’s Studio Development Project funded by Mercy Foundation Homelessness NSW

“These women said there were prepared to trade space if it meant having their own private unit. They considered that having self-contained accommodation was more suitable to their needs and life stage. They perceived shared common areas and community rooms to be institutional and as consequence of this, rarely used. Privacy and stability (expressed as security of tenure and not having to move again) were most important to them” – Older Women’s Studio Development Project funded by Mercy Foundation Homelessness NSW

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government implements interventions to address affordability across the housing continuum to provide relief to various cohorts in different parts of the market.
- The Victorian Government provides improved access to flexible private rental support programs and new rent-to-buy schemes.
- The Victorian Government acknowledges the extremely tight marginal returns on some community housing tenancies.
- The Victorian Government explores mechanisms to bring more private housing in to the social and affordable housing system, possibly via a tailored rental subsidy scheme (similar to the Commonwealth Rental Assistance program) that sees its eligibility extended beyond people receiving a social security payment.
- The Victorian Government provides innovative and flexible housing designed to allow for changes to adapt to ageing, disability or family growth by being able to create more space through extensions or use of land area. This may also include consideration of provisions for an ageing parent to be accommodated with the addition of a room or by using available backyard space.

- The Victorian Government designs and acquires properties that are universally accessible and where aids for persons with physical disability can be added easily. These may include ramps, flat spaces in bathrooms and the absence of steps.
- The Victorian Government provides ageing-in-place initiatives, where the dwelling is modified to accommodate the changing requirements of occupants as they get older.
- The Victorian Government provides for more single dwellings for street-to-home programs. Funding for these properties needs to ensure the large numbers of single people can move directly into permanent housing and that the necessary support is also funded. Without appropriate and adequate support, some people in this cohort find being housed difficult and can fall back into homelessness. At the moment, The Salvation Army provides many such support services with internal funding.
- When acquiring housing stock and placing individuals and families, the Victorian Government ensures that there is adequate access to public transport, social infrastructure and a sense of community.
- The Victorian Government ensures that access to education, training and employment pathways is a key consideration in housing young people. For example, housing needs to be close to places of education and employment, with affordable transport options.
- The Victorian Government ensures that affordable housing is also environmentally sustainable and energy efficient.
- The Victorian Government provides energy efficiency upgrades and solar photovoltaic installations for social housing dwellings. Implemented as part of a stimulus plan, this initiative could produce multiple benefits to housing providers, tenants, employment, the economy and the environment. Eligibility for energy efficiency programs could also be extended to low-income households.
- The Victorian Government provides for family and domestic violence design features to be added to social housing stock to ensure the physical safety of women and children. These should include additional security measures such as shutters on windows, security and reinforced doors, and movement-activated lights and cameras.

Summary of recommendations

The policy landscape

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government continues to strengthen community-based supports, while increasing the amount of supported housing options available to Victorians experiencing homelessness and mental illness.
- The Victorian Government implements in full the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria within the context of other relevant policy initiatives that intersect with social and affordable housing and homelessness.
- The Victorian Government works with the Commonwealth Government to address the systemic causes of homelessness, including the inadequacy of payments and supplements such as JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

Growth

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government commits to an ongoing funding program for community housing to provide certainty.
- The Strategy seeks to address the bottlenecks in transitional housing due to the lack of exit points, including into social housing.
- The Victorian Government undertakes a review of rental collection in community housing.
- The Victorian Government introduces mandatory inclusionary zoning, including transparency and accountability frameworks.
- The Victorian Government provides not-for-profit organisations with discounted rates to incentivise investment in housing, where low rental returns, maintenance costs, rates and taxes can be prohibitive.
- The Victorian Government provides better access to information about the availability of land.
- The Victorian Government provides adequate funding for community housing providers to develop housing in regional communities.

- The Victorian Government provides transparent data from the Victorian Housing Register and housing sector to allow community housing providers to meet identified needs.
- The Victorian Government makes available a searchable register of local and state government land suitable for short to medium-term housing.
- The Victorian Government works with the community housing sector to define clear roles in the provision of affordable housing.

People at the centre

Homelessness and the intersection with complex needs

Recommendations

- The development of a social and affordable housing strategy provides critical consideration of different cohorts impacted by housing affordability and homelessness and their varying support needs.
- The Victorian Government equips housing and support services with tools and resources to recognise and effectively respond to the deep and complex individual risk factors experienced among different client cohorts.
- The Victorian Government designs policies and systems that encourage and facilitate better linkages and cooperation between different social service providers.
- The Victorian Government ensures people without permanent residency or citizenship (particularly those without work rights) can access housing and other services until their visa status is resolved.
- The Victorian Government acknowledges there will most likely continue to be unprecedented and increasing demand for housing and support services by women over 55.
- The Victorian Government ensures social and affordable housing is built, located, and makes adequate policy provision for pets.
- The Strategy recognises the intersection with multiple and complex needs, including those due to trauma or those arising from alcohol and other drug-related issues, deinstitutionalisation and mental health. The development of a social and affordable housing Strategy should provide critical consideration of different cohorts impacted by housing affordability and homelessness and their varying support needs
- Provision of housing and support services need the tools and resources to recognise and effectively respond to the deep and complex individual risk factors experienced among different client cohorts

- Policies and systems need to ensure better linkages and cooperation between different social service providers
- People without permanent residency or citizenship (particularly those without work rights) require dedicated housing and services until their visa status is resolved.
- That the Victorian Government acknowledge there will most likely continue to be unprecedented and increasing demand for housing and support services by women over 55
- That social and affordable housing is built, located, and makes adequate policy provision for pets
- In developing housing policy and support needs, the Strategy must consider the intersection with complex needs including those due to trauma or those arising from alcohol and other drug-related issues, deinstitutionalization and mental health.

Young people

Recommendation

- In recognition of the unique circumstances and needs of young people, the Victorian Government develops a stand-alone strategy (or adjunct to the new Youth Strategy) to address housing-related issues and homelessness among young people.

Pathways

Prevention and Early Intervention

Recommendations

- The Strategy commits to increase access to rapid re-housing approaches.
- The Strategy prioritises early intervention and prevention initiatives.
- The Strategy ensures the important role of rent subsidies and support to maintain tenancies.

Support

Recommendation

- The provision of appropriate support services for the duration of need is recognised as foundational for people to thrive and maintain their tenancies.

Performance measurement

Recommendations

- The Victorian Government acknowledges that it is often an unrealistic goal for people to move on from social housing in view of the critically unaffordable housing market. This is particularly true for people experiencing significant disadvantage and complex needs.
- The Strategy acknowledges that the current key performance measures (KPMs) for community housing organisations measure output and that it would be more effective to instead measure the social impact of the sector. Alternative social housing outcome measures could include a reduction in the need for support or better quality of life should be considered.

Affordable housing issues and features

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- The Victorian Government implements interventions to address affordability across the housing continuum to provide relief to various cohorts in different parts of the market.
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- The Victorian Government provides for more single dwellings for street-to-home programs. Funding for these properties needs to ensure the large numbers of single people can move directly into permanent housing and that the necessary support is also funded. Without appropriate and adequate support, some people in this cohort find being housed difficult and can fall back into homelessness. At the moment, The Salvation Army provides many such support services with internal funding.
- When acquiring housing stock and placing individuals and families, the Victorian Government ensures that there is adequate access to public transport, social infrastructure and a sense of community.
- The Victorian Government ensures that access to education, training and employment pathways is a key consideration in housing young people. For example, housing needs to be close to places of education and employment, with affordable transport options.
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- The Victorian Government provides for family and domestic violence design features to be added to social housing stock to ensure the physical safety of women and children. These should include additional security measures such as shutters on windows, security and reinforced doors, and movement-activated lights and cameras.

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a presence in 128 countries. Operating in Australia since 1880, The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social services and programs for people experiencing hardship, injustice and social exclusion.

The Salvation Army Australia has a national operating budget of over \$700 million and provides more than 1,000 social programs and activities through networks of social support services, community centres and churches across the country. Programs include:

- Financial inclusion, including emergency relief
- Homelessness services
- Youth services
- Family and domestic violence services
- Alcohol, drugs and other addictions
- Chaplaincy
- Emergency and disaster response
- Aged care
- Employment services

As a mission driven organisation, The Salvation Army seeks to reduce social disadvantage and create a fair and harmonious society through holistic and person-centred approaches that reflect our mission to share the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

Further Information

The Salvation Army would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission should any further information be of assistance.

Further information can be sought from Major Paul Hateley, National Head of Government Relations, at government.relations@salvationarmy.org.au or on 0413 830 201.

