

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES STRUGGLING TO COPE, ESCALATING RISKS FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIM SURVIVORS

A surge in demand for homelessness services has left the system overwhelmed, leaving many unable to access critical support.

[Melbourne] — The release of a new report, *Call Unanswered*, by Impact Economics and Policy for Homelessness Australia, paints a grim picture of Australia’s homelessness crisis. The report reveals that overwhelmed homelessness services are leaving families, children, and individuals without critical support, escalating risks for those fleeing family violence.

Surveying 23 specialist homelessness services, including specialist family violence services, over two weeks in September 2024, the report highlights the stress that under-resourced providers are under:

- Services couldn’t answer phones for 325 hours (1 in every 13 operating hours).
- Front doors were closed for 200.5 hours (1 in every 22 operating hours).
- 666 urgent emails went unanswered.

“Family violence remains the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia,” said Tania Farha, CEO of Safe and Equal. “The chronic shortage of crisis and long-term housing leaves victim survivors trapped in cycles of abuse, poverty, and instability. Demand for homelessness services has skyrocketed, yet the system is significantly under-resourced. Families with children were turned away on one in five of the days surveyed, and individuals without dependents face even greater barriers, being turned away on one in two of the days surveyed.”

PRESS RELEASE



“Specialist family violence services work directly with victim survivors to help them escape and keep them safe while they recover,” said Farha.

“Without safe and affordable housing options too many victim survivors face an impossible choice: stay with their abuser or face homelessness.”

A Growing Housing Crisis Puts Victim Survivors in Danger

Australia's housing crisis has emerged as a major contributor to homelessness, especially for victim survivors of domestic violence. Rental vacancies have plummeted to record lows since mid-2022, driven by shifting housing demand and a shortage of affordable rental properties. This has left renters with fewer options and intensified competition for available homes.

In Victoria, the number of low-income households facing rental stress has soared by 23.1% since the 2021 Census, with an estimated 229,000 households now struggling to keep up with rent payments.

The shortage of long-term accommodation is leading to longer support periods, with individuals remaining in temporary housing and relying on homelessness services for extended durations. Between 2011 and 2022, the number of people in Australia receiving accommodation support for over 12 months rose by 76%.

“Without stable housing, victim survivors can’t move beyond crisis interventions to focus on safety and recovery,” said Farha.

What Needs to Be Done?

We welcome the new five-year National Agreement which allocates \$400 million annually to homelessness services and requires matching contributions from states. However, additional federal investment is essential to reduce homelessness risk and address unmet service demand.

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Safe and Equal joins Homelessness Australia to call for immediate government action to address the inextricably linked crises of homelessness and family violence. Key recommendations in the new report include an increase in social housing and support payments; strengthening programs to intervene earlier and prevent homelessness; increasing funding for homelessness and family violence services; a housing first approach prioritising immediate access to permanent housing paired with tailored support services; and data-driven service planning.

Without significant and urgent investment, the cycles of abuse, poverty, and homelessness will persist, leaving family violence victim survivors and all Australians facing homelessness with limited options and no clear path to recovery.

END

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About Safe and Equal

Safe and Equal is the peak body for Victorian organisations that specialise in family and gender-based violence across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

As a peak, we work with and for our members to prevent and respond to violence, building a better future for adults, children and young people experiencing, at risk of, or recovering from family and gender-based violence.

PRESS RELEASE

SAFE+EQUAL

We are an independent, non-government organisation that leads, organises, advocates for, and acts on behalf of our members to drive the continued development of an innovative and leading sector.

Australia is facing a national crisis, with more than one woman murdered every week in 2024. These are only the known cases. Visit [Destroy the Joint](#) for the latest figures.

About the Report

The [Call Unanswered](#) report offers a stark warning about the impact of underfunded homelessness services on Australia's most vulnerable populations. Conducted by Impact Economics and Policy, the survey captured 330 response days from providers, highlighting systemic issues that demand immediate action.