



## Safe and Sound – Family Violence Reforms to provide housing for people impacted

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While nursing her four-month-old baby one evening on the south coast of NSW, Elsa called a family violence refuge hotline. It was her only opportunity to do so, as her abusive partner was out of the house. Elsa was told there was a ten-year waitlist for accommodation, and her best option was a hotel.

Luckily, she could briefly couch surf with trusted friends before applying for a low-quality rental property. “If that had not happened, I may have gone back. He was asking for me to go back.”

Madison Griffiths, *No Refuge*, The Saturday Paper.

Christian belief and practice are centred on an understanding of God as love. That love is seen expressly in Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection form the core of Christian belief. Connected with God’s love are concepts such as justice and righteousness, which are opposites of oppression, injustice and sin. An outworking of justice is peace (shalom) and salvation (i.e. being saved from oppression, injustice, sin, etc). Any mistreatment of those with less power is an injustice.

Domestic and family violence (sometimes referred to as “domestic abuse”) is a form of oppression that breaks the human spirit and relationships, preys on people in their vulnerability, violates the safety of home life and attacks a person’s most basic human values of trust, love, hope and self-worth.

### Family and Domestic Violence and Homelessness

In Australia, family and domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. Of women and girls seeking a roof over their heads, 45% are survivors of family and domestic violence. In Victoria, in the 2022-2023 financial year, 54% of all women, young people and children who visited a Specialist Homelessness Service reported they had experienced family violence. A lack of housing for those fleeing family and domestic violence can force them to return to abusive partners. Women fleeing abusive partners have reported being forced to sleep in their cars.

In Victoria, the lack of public and community service organisation run housing (known as social housing) means that children, women, and young people who have been identified as needing urgent housing as a result of family and domestic violence are waiting an average of 19.5 months to get into social housing.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare about one in four survivors of family and domestic violence get referred between community support services without getting the emergency accommodation they need. They report having to constantly re-tell their traumatic stories and fill out new and different forms at each service.



The inability of family and domestic violence services to provide meaningful support to survivors has caused survivors, like Elsa in the story from *The Saturday Paper*, to disengage from such services.

A February 2025 research paper by the Life Course Centre into *Motels as Crisis Accommodation for Families* found that there is an increasing use of motels as crisis accommodation for people fleeing family and domestic violence. However, such accommodation is often inappropriate for children for extended stays and does not provide



safety and stability in the long term. Motels frequently lack cooking facilities, which can be particularly challenging for families with children or those with specific dietary needs. Safety fears can often mean that children are kept in the motel rooms. Some survivors of family violence had reported that staying in cheap motels is frequently scarier, more isolating, and more traumatising than staying in a violent home.

### **What You Can Do**

Write polite and respectful letters or e-mails to:

#### **The Hon Clare O'Neil MP**

Minister for Housing  
Minister for Homelessness  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

#### **The Hon Ged Kearney MP**

Assistant Minister for Women and the  
Prevention of Family Violence  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

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Points to make in your letters:

- Express concern at the lack of housing for people having to flee family and domestic violence, which is forcing some people to return to violent partners or to have to sleep in their cars.
- Express further concern that some survivors of family and domestic violence, especially children, are being required to move into unsuitable motel accommodation due to the shortage of housing for them.
- Ask that the Australian Government fund the provision of 30,000 homes as social housing annually over the next 20 years.
- Request the Australian Government fund:
  - additional Special Family Violence Service staff to increase the capacity of services to assist people impacted by family violence to find safe and secure housing; and,
  - a doubling of the crisis accommodation places for people in crisis due to family and domestic violence, to reduce the reliance on hotels.

**Acknowledgement:** The action has drawn from the report by the Council of Homeless Persons "Bridging the gap between homelessness and family violence services" (2025).