Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

The Need for Housing Reforms to assist Single Mothers and their Children in Victoria

Issued October 2026

We pledge ourselves to hope and work for a nation whose goals are not guided by self-interest alone, but by concern for the welfare of all persons everywhere - the family of the One God - the God made known in Jesus of Nazareth, the One who gave His life for others.

We pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond.

From the Statement to the Nation by the Inaugural National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1977.

The Synod Justice and International Mission Cluster is supporting the advocacy of the Victorian Council of Single Mothers and their Children (CSMC). CSMC has represented single mother families in Victoria for 57 years. There are 212,000 single mothers in Victoria.

Housing for those fleeing family violence

There is a need to provide more housing for women and children escaping family violence. The Victorian Government's own target is to house families fleeing family violence within 10.5 months of being approved for priority housing. The current average is 17.3 months.

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 with their children.



In 2023, the Victorian Government committed to building 12,000 affordable and social housing dwellings. However, the definition of affordable housing does not mean people on low incomes can afford to buy or rent the homes. "Affordable housing" can mean rent is 10% below market rates, which, in inner Melbourne, could still be unaffordable for people on lower incomes. Affordable housing schemes set a minimum income you must earn before you can apply to access the housing. The level is at least an annual income of $67,711 in Melbourne and $47,251 in regional Victoria. A single mother on Parenting Payment does not earn that anywhere in the state, even with paid work.

Of 15,244 rental properties advertised in Victoria over one weekend in March 2026, none in Melbourne were affordable for a single parent on the government-provided Parenting Payment Single, and only one in regional Victoria was affordable.

Victoria continues to have the lowest proportion of social housing of any state in Australia, at only 2.95% of Victorian homes. The national average is 4.04%. "Social housing" means both government-run public housing and housing run by non-government community organisations. Social housing is the main affordable housing option for people on low incomes.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, the Victorian Government cut social housing spending from $2.36 billion to $2.16 billion. The Victorian Budget for the 2026 – 2027 financial year promised $860 million for a Social Housing Growth Fund. The funding aims to deliver more than 7,000 social homes for Victorians who need them most.

A home a family can stay in, and that is fit to live in
On paper, Victoria has one of the strongest systems to regulate landlords in Australia. Rental properties must already meet 15 minimum standards before they can be advertised – such as a working heater, no mould, and secure locks. However, no one verifies that they do. Enforcement waits on a tenant complaining. There is little protection against retaliation by a landlord or real estate agent against a single mother who complains about a broken heater, risking losing the accommodation for her family.

Bring rent-tech into the open
Rental applications are increasingly assessed by software and artificial intelligence, which score and rank applicants before a person reads them. When an application is rejected, no reason has to be given. These systems need regulation. A rental applicant should be told when an automated assessment contributed to a rejection. A person, not a score, should decide who gets a home.

What You Can Do
Write polite and respectful letters or emails to:

The Hon Ben Carroll
Premier
Office of the Premier
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

Salutation: Dear Premier

E-mail: ben.carroll@parliament.vic.gov.au

Ms Jess Wilson
Leader of the Opposition
12 Parkhill Rd
Kew VIC 3101

Salutation: Dear Ms Wilson

E-mail:
jess.wilson.mp@parliament.vic.gov.au

You can also write to local candidates in your electorate. You can find the candidates in your electorate on the Victorian Electoral Commission website (https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/electoral-boundaries/which-boundaries-cover-where-i-live).

Points to make in your letters or e-mails:
- Express concern that women and children fleeing family violence in Victoria face an average wait of 17.3 months before being able to access government-supported housing.
- Ask them to outline what they will do in office to rapidly reduce that wait time and provide lasting and secure housing for women and children fleeing family violence.
- Express concern that there is inadequate checking that rental properties meet the required 15 minimum standards to make them liveable.
- Further, express concern that increasingly artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms are being used to assess rental applications.
- Seek their reassurance that if they form the next Victorian Government, they will:
    - regulate the use of AI and algorithms to assess rental applications; and,
    - ensure there are checks to make sure that rental properties meet the required standards to make them liveable.

Please send any replies to your letters to jim@victas.uca.org.au

Please let the Council of Single Mothers and their Children know of any letters you send at their website www.csmc.org.au/one-fair-go-letter-writing

You could also sign the Council of Single Mothers and their Children open letter at https://www.csmc.org.au/one-fair-go