

**Victorian Government
response to the Legal and
Social Issues Committee
Inquiry into
Homelessness in Victoria**

February 2024

Acknowledgement

The Victorian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respects to Elders past and present.

We proudly acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples as the world's oldest living culture and contribution of generations of Aboriginal leaders who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities.

Introduction

On 7 June 2019, the 59th Victorian Parliament's Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:

That this House requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, within 12 months, on the state of homelessness in Victoria, and in particular, the Committee should:

- a) provide an independent analysis of the changing scale and nature of homelessness across Victoria*
- b) investigate the many social, economic and policy factors that impact on homelessness and*
- c) identify policies and practices from all levels of government that have a bearing on delivering services to the homeless.*

The Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee of the 59th Parliament (the Committee) conducted an inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria (the Inquiry). The Victorian Government acknowledges the substantial work of the Committee and all agencies, organisations and individuals who have contributed to this important inquiry, particularly those with lived experience of homelessness.

The Committee received over 450 submissions and held eighteen public hearings throughout Victoria between August 2019 and September 2020.

The Committee's final report included 51 recommendations, of which 45 are supported by the Victorian Government in full or in principle. A further four recommendations are under review and two are not supported. Further information is provided in the Recommendation Responses section of this document.

Preparation of this Victorian Government Response has been led by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (including Homes Victoria, Children and Families and Family Safety Victoria divisions) with support from the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, Department of Justice and Community Safety, Department of Government Services and the Department of Transport and Planning.

The Victorian Government response

Homelessness can have a devastating and lasting impact on people's lives. It affects the physical and mental health of people, their connection to family and friends and ability to participate in their communities. Homelessness also results in significant pressure and costs on other government-funded service systems, such as the health and justice systems.

The Victorian Government supports the Inquiry's key findings that propose a two-pronged approach to:

- provide more long-term housing
- intervene early to prevent homelessness.

The Victorian Government also supports the Inquiry's finding that addressing the current scale of homelessness requires a joint response from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. Every Victorian should be able to find a place to call home – a place of pride, comfort, and security. The Victorian Government has embarked on a long-term strategic approach across five pillars to make homelessness in Victoria rare, brief and non-recurring. These five pillars align to the Inquiry's findings and are outlined below.

Five pillars to making homelessness in Victoria rare, brief and non-recurring

- People are supported quickly to access and sustain housing
- People are connected to the right mix, sequence and intensity of housing and support that is proportionate and tailored to their needs
- All parts of the social service system share responsibility for achieving outcomes
- First Peoples' homelessness services are self-determined
- The homelessness system has the capability to support the delivery of contemporary programs.

The Victorian Government's investments in addressing homelessness and in growing social and affordable housing in recent years have already enabled action across these five pillars.

Since the Committee tabled its final report, the Victorian Government has funded several initiatives that reform Victoria's approach to homelessness and address multiple recommendations from the Inquiry. This includes \$134 million in the 2023-24 State Budget for homelessness and housing support. The Victorian Government is also partnering with the Commonwealth Government to deliver more social and affordable housing.

On 20 September 2023, Victoria released an ambitious plan – *Victoria's Housing Statement: The decade ahead 2024 – 2034* (Victoria's Housing Statement) – to tackle one of the root problems facing Victoria's housing and homelessness sectors: housing supply. The Government has set a bold target to build 800,000 homes in Victoria over the next decade.

Providing more long-term housing

Having housing that is safe, secure and suitable is fundamental. The Victorian Government, and in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, continues to deliver record investment to provide Victorians who need housing with the stability and dignity of a home.

Building more social and affordable housing

Victoria's Housing Statement includes a continued focus and investment in building more social and affordable homes across Victoria. Key actions and investment include:

- Launching Australia's biggest ever urban renewal project by retiring and redeveloping all of Melbourne's 44 ageing high-rise public housing estates by 2051. This will mean that households will move into a new home that meets modern building standards. It will boost the overall number of social housing dwellings across these sites by ten per cent as well as adding to the number of affordable and market homes in Victoria.
- Building up to 769 new social housing homes over the next five years with funding from the Commonwealth Government's Social Housing Accelerator. This will include low density developments on Homes Victoria owned land, as well as medium and high-density developments on Victorian Government land. Site spot purchases will also be investigated for further developments. This funding will support the redevelopment of the two towers in Carlton to be new public housing.
- Investment of \$1 billion in Affordable Housing Investment Partnerships providing low interest loans and government guarantees to finance social and affordable housing delivered by the community housing and not-for-profit sectors for Victorians who need it most. This expands on the previous Building Financial Capacity of Housing Agencies initiative bringing the total funding available up to \$2.1 billion.
- Exploring opportunities to buy pre-sale off-the-plan apartments in medium and high-density developments, as well as opportunities for long term head-leasing of units that are left over when development projects are completed, to boost social and affordable housing.
- Introducing a short stay levy with the revenue to go to Homes Victoria to support the work of building and maintaining social and affordable housing across the state. Twenty-five per cent of funds from the short stay levy will be invested in regional Victoria.

Victoria's Housing Statement builds on implementation of the Victorian Government's \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build, on track to provide more than 12,000 new homes. The Victorian Government has also announced a \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund to deliver more than 1,300 homes across regional Victoria.

The Big Housing Build will deliver a significant number of new homes to Victorians in need, including Victorians experiencing homelessness, through initiatives such as the Public Housing Renewal Program, Ground Lease Model Initiative and the Social Housing Growth Fund.

Since the Big Housing Build began, more than 9,200 homes have been completed or are underway. More than 3,400 households have either moved in or are getting ready to move into new homes. These new homes will provide many Victorians with a safe, secure and stable home, from which they can build a future.

Large scale developments have opened or will open soon in Ascot Vale (200 homes), Ashburton (178 homes), Hawthorn (206 homes), Heidelberg West (120 homes), Brighton (299 homes), Flemington (366 homes) and Prahran (445). At the same time across regional Victoria projects are underway in Benalla, Bendigo and Ballarat.

Since July 2021, Homes Victoria has commissioned over 3,300 social homes under the Social Housing Growth Fund from the community housing sector, supported by government investment of over \$1 billion in upfront capital grant funding, creating over 13,000 jobs across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. In September 2023 an additional \$17 million was allocated to build 55 new social homes across regional Victoria across seven local government areas – Wodonga, Latrobe, Mildura, Moira, Alpine, Indigo and Hepburn.

A \$85 million investment through the Social Housing Growth Fund's Mental Health Supported Housing was announced in June 2023, delivering up to 214 new homes and creating close to 880 jobs.

In February 2023, the Victorian Government launched Homes Victoria Affordable (the first of its kind in Australia) making homes available to low to moderate income earners across the state, with rents capped at 30 percent of median income. Homes in Ascot Vale, Kensington, Ashburton and Blackburn are already available and being tenanted by eligible renters. Homes in Hawthorn and Heidelberg West will be available by early 2024. These are just a few sites that are part of this initiative that will deliver 2,400 affordable rental homes to house Victorians being priced out of the private rental market in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

In implementing these landmark housing investments, the Victorian Government is also delivering more Aboriginal community-controlled social housing for Victoria's First Peoples, more safe, secure homes for victim survivors of family violence, guaranteed minimum social and affordable housing investment into regional Victoria (\$1.25 billion) and 2,000 supported homes for, and co-designed with, Victorians with severe mental illness.

The Victorian Government is also working with the Commonwealth Government to build on this substantial investment.

The Commonwealth, states and territories are seeking to renegotiate the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) by 30 June 2024. The NHHA reflects the Commonwealth and state and territory governments' joint responsibility for housing and homelessness. The opportunity associated with NHHA renegotiation is to drive national housing and homelessness reforms, including unlocking key Commonwealth levers and funding.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of the NHHA in supporting social housing and essential homelessness services. While the states have a crucial role to play, meaningful change cannot be delivered without the Commonwealth utilising its levers to provide a clear vision and enduring investment that positions social housing as essential social infrastructure.

These investments contribute to addressing recommendations 37, 39, 41, 42, 44, 46 and 51.

Housing First approaches to end the cycle of homelessness

The Victorian Government has invested in the largest program based on Housing First principles in Australia, where people are able to avoid crisis accommodation and are instead placed into long term housing. This approach is backed by international evidence based best-practice and leads to positive outcomes for both the individual and the communities within which they live.

To date, the From Homelessness to a Home and Homes for Families programs have supported around 2,000 households into stable housing with tailored and flexible support and continue to support over 1,600 households, who need further assistance to build their confidence and capability to remain stably housed.

Other notable Housing First investments include the Partnerships Addressing Disadvantage program, which includes investment in the Journey to Social Inclusion program which assists Victorians previously experiencing chronic homelessness to maintain stable housing, health and wellbeing, and the Arc program to better support people leaving prison. Funding has also been provided to deliver a Housing First approach for around 225 young people with complex needs who are exiting residential care and other settings.

Victoria has also invested in eight permanent supportive housing facilities: four are already operational in Melbourne, Carlton, Dandenong and Seddon; two are under construction in Melbourne and St Kilda, and; two are to be located in regional Victoria, with sites to be determined.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing will also initiate reform of the Transitional Housing program at a small scale. The program reform will draw on Housing First principles to design a contemporary approach that works to end homelessness, providing people with long term housing and flexible multidisciplinary support.

Together these investments contribute to addressing recommendations 3, 37, 39, 40 and 41.

Addressing the impact of current Commonwealth income support on achieving long-term housing

The Victorian Government will continue to highlight the impact of current levels of Commonwealth income support on Victorians struggling to secure and sustain housing. This includes increasing housing affordability challenges, alongside challenges people with insecure housing face to receive income support payments and stay on them.

This investment contributes to addressing recommendation 47.

Intervening early to tackle homelessness

The Victorian Government's long-term strategic approach to addressing homelessness in Victoria is underpinned by intervening early to prevent homelessness.

Already the Victorian Government has started to reorient Victoria's homelessness response from one that is crisis-driven to one that intervenes early and shares responsibility across the social services system for prevention and response.

The government is also intervening early through investing for impact, supporting Victorians at risk in private rentals, self-determined Aboriginal services, preventing young people from becoming homeless, and addressing homelessness resulting from family violence.

Cross-sector collaboration and responsibility

To make homelessness rare, short-lived and non-recurring, all parts of Victoria's social services, health, justice and related systems need to play a role. The Victorian Government is working to strengthen collaboration across the specialist housing and homelessness sectors and across service systems.

The 2023-24 State Budget provided ongoing funding for several cross-sector partnerships designed to prevent and address homelessness. This included funding to:

- continue the valuable partnership between the Wyndham Health, Housing and Homelessness (H3) Alliance, which provides a collaborative response to homelessness in the expanding Wyndham growth corridor.
- continue to assist people exiting prison to transition into stable housing and reduce the risk of recidivism through the Correctional Housing Pathways initiative.
- on-site delivery of essential health and addiction services at four congregate crisis accommodation facilities, to help treat the underlying complex and diverse causes of people's

homelessness, including alcohol and other drug treatment and mental health and chronic health treatment.

- the Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative, which is a partnership between Homes Victoria and the Department of Health and involves funding nine specialist youth dual diagnosis practitioners across the state. These workers assist young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have also have mental health and/or alcohol and other drug issues to get the support they need.

Victorian Government initiatives across other portfolios are also strengthening Victoria's early intervention response to people with high-risk of homelessness.

The Victorian Government's ongoing investment in Better Futures and Home Stretch for young people leaving care and young people transitioning from permanent care orders is strengthening cross sector responses to prevent homelessness, including extending this to young people on permanent care orders until their 21st birthday.

The new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (the Locals) and reformed Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Area Services) are being designed to identify risks of homelessness early and forge referral pathways. Consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the Locals and Area Services will screen people for additional risks and needs, including homelessness, so they can be connected to relevant supports.

These initiatives contribute to addressing recommendations 14, 18, and 24.

Investing for impact

Through the Early Intervention Investment Framework (the framework), homelessness services investment has been directed to where it can interrupt the cycle of homelessness. The framework links government investment to quantifiable impacts for people using the services as well as the service system, to improve outcomes for individuals. This also reduces pressure on acute services and allows avoided costs to be reinvested back into the broader social services system.

Several of Victoria's Housing First initiatives have been funded under the framework in recognition that they are likely to deliver both better life outcomes and also prevent people experiencing homelessness from reaching crises that need high-cost acute interventions.

Additionally, the Victorian Government's \$10.9 million investment through the 2021-22 State Budget to establish analytical assets that use de-identified linked data from departmental and agency systems to predict client trajectories will enhance effective early intervention investment, including under the framework. These new analytical assets will help monitor the number of people experiencing different forms of homelessness, enable better targeting of early interventions to prevent chronic homelessness, and support evaluation of their impact.

The Victorian Government has also invested in innovative, outcomes-driven homelessness services through the Partnerships Addressing Disadvantage. This has included:

- the *Journey to Social Inclusion* program, which assists Victorians previously experiencing chronic homelessness to maintain stable housing, health and wellbeing and avoid a return to homelessness and previous high-volume use of acute health services.
- the *Arc* program to better support people leaving prison and reduce re-offending and homelessness. Participants will receive two years of intensive case management support post-release and access to housing support.

These initiatives contribute to addressing recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 6.

Supporting Victorians at risk in private rentals

The Victorian Government is embedding early intervention capacity into the homelessness system with ongoing investment in the suite of private rental assistance programs. These programs prevent and end homelessness by rapidly rehousing people in private rental or assisting them to stabilise and sustain their private rental tenancies.

The 2021-22 State Budget invested \$110.2 million over four years in the Private Rental Assistance, Private Rental Assistance Plus, Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Plus programs. This funding is now ongoing, with the Private Rental Assistance Program and the Private Rental Assistance Program Plus (an outreach support service to people in private rental) accessible in 17 locations across Victoria. The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance programs are accessible from five locations and will expand to nine in 2023 across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Victoria's Housing Statement increases protections of renters' rights. This includes introducing a portable rental bond scheme; extending notice of rent increases and notice to vacate periods to 90 days; introducing mandatory continuing professional development for real estate agents, property managers, owner's corporation managers and conveyancers; making rental applications easier; and protecting renters' personal information.

A \$2 million Rental Stress Support Package, through the Victorian Property Fund, will also help to address the high demand for rental assistance from organisations who work to prevent homelessness and help renters to stay in their homes.

These investments contribute to addressing recommendations 11 to 13.

Intervening early through self-determined Aboriginal homelessness services

The Victorian Government is committed to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the associated targets. Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan prioritises self-determination which is critical to developing a new relationship between the State and Victoria's First Peoples.

The Victorian Aboriginal community has provided the Victorian Government with *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoot*: the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework and the *Blueprint for an Aboriginal-specific homelessness system* to guide how government and community can collaborate to achieve quality housing outcomes for Victoria's First Peoples, including addressing the overrepresentation of First Peoples people experiencing homelessness.

As highlighted, the Victorian Government is expanding the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program to a further four sites determined through the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum. The program will now be available at nine sites across Bayside Peninsula, Brimbank Melton, North Eastern Melbourne, Western Melbourne, Goulburn, Loddon, Mallee, Inner and Outer Gippsland.

The 2022-23 State Budget funded the establishment of an Aboriginal homelessness entry point to provide culturally appropriate intake, assessment and planning responses and multidisciplinary teams to better support Victoria's First Peoples experiencing homelessness.

This pilot service response for First Peoples will provide an additional layer of support at outreach and entry to the homelessness system as well as intensive support for people with multiple and complex needs. Design and implementation of the entry point and multidisciplinary teams has commenced and will be self-determined by the First Peoples community.

In May 2023, the Government announced it approved in principle the Aboriginal Public Housing Transfer Management Pilot starting in targeted areas. First Peoples public housing renters will have the option to transfer housing tenancy management from Homes Victoria to a registered Aboriginal community housing provider.

This will allow First Peoples renters to receive enhanced culturally safe service provision, greater choice, flexibility, and control over who manages their tenancy. Homes Victoria will continue to work with First Peoples communities to progress the pilot.

These initiatives contribute to addressing recommendations 7, 11 and 12.

Giving young people at risk of homelessness a kick start

Investing to intervene early and preventing young people from becoming at risk of homelessness is vital to addressing Homelessness in Victoria.

The 2023-24 State Budget provided funding to prevent and address youth homelessness including through the Village 21 Preston initiative, which provides studio accommodation and support to young people, continued funding for the Holmesglen Education First Youth Foyer, the Kids Under Cover Studio program supporting young people at risk of homelessness and the Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative. This is in addition to funding provided to deliver mobile outreach services to young people year-round in Western Melbourne.

Funding was also provided to deliver a Housing First approach for around 225 young people with complex needs who are exiting residential care and other settings. Through the initiative, which is modelled on the successful COMPASS Partnerships Addressing Disadvantage program, young people will be supported towards independence through three years of multidisciplinary support and access to housing.

In early 2023, the Victorian Government announced the recipients of the \$50 million Youth Capital Grants, delivering 10 supportive youth housing projects, including two new regional Education First Youth Foyers and targeted accommodation for young people leaving care, that will provide options for at least 130 young people.

This builds on significant investments through recent State Budgets in continuing existing Education First Youth Foyers and introducing Home Stretch, a new initiative which supports young people leaving care to secure stable accommodation while they transition to adulthood.

The Victorian Government is also preventing homelessness through a range of child and family focused initiatives that stabilise family situations, even before homelessness becomes a risk. These diversion initiatives include:

- the 2021-22 State budget investment into Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST) programs targeting young people in youth justice and their families.
- the \$17.7 million over three years for Putting Families First (PFF) to trial a model that supports justice-involved families with multiple interactions across social, health and justice services.
- the \$140 million to transform the children and families service system and improve outcomes for First Peoples children and keep families together.

These initiatives contribute to addressing recommendations 16, 17 and 18.

Addressing homelessness resulting from family violence

The Victorian Government recognises family violence is a key driver of demand for homelessness services. This is why as part of the response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Victorian Government invested \$152 million for flexible and tailored responses that meet the individual needs of victim survivors of family violence.

The Victorian Government has continued to build on this investment and implement initiatives that address homelessness resulting from family violence.

A new crisis response model has been developed, focused on providing timely and, where safe, local responses to victim survivors who need crisis accommodation. The model will apply to all Specialist Family Services across Victoria from August 2023. As part of this initiative, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is partnering with Safe Steps, the state-wide service which provides Victoria's central co-ordination point for referrals to refuges, to enhance data capture and reporting to inform demand modelling and commence an independent evaluation of the model.

The Victorian Government is also redeveloping 17 communal refuges across the state into core and cluster models and establishing two new Aboriginal core and cluster refuges. To date, 14 redevelopments have been completed across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Construction of the remaining redevelopments is scheduled to be completed during 2024-25. At the end of the program, there will be new facilities in Goulburn, Ovens Murray, Mallee, Inner and Outer Gippsland, Wimmera South-West and Barwon.

The 2021-22 State Budget also provided a further \$9 million over four years to construct and operate a new Aboriginal specific core-and-cluster refuge in Horsham (Wimmera South West area), taking the number of new Aboriginal core and cluster refuges to three. The 2022-23 State Budget provided \$69 million over four years to provide two additional family violence core and cluster refuges in areas of high demand, as well as an additional six crisis accommodation properties to help victim survivors, who still need support and accommodation assistance upon leaving a refuge.

There will be 35 family violence refuges across Victoria with capacity to support approximately 197 households at any one time once the current refuge redevelopment program and additional refuges provided through the 2022-23 State Budget are completed.

Additionally, over \$20 million is available through Flexible Support Packages (FSPs) which provide victim survivors with supports for suitable and stable housing including assistance with mortgage costs, rent, relocation costs and material goods. FSPs also provide access to a range of safety and security measures under the Personal Safety Initiative, which assist victim survivors to remain safely in their own home and community or to relocate safely to a new property.

These initiatives contribute to addressing recommendations 9, 10 and 35.

Summary

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting Victorians to have a safe, stable home. This response highlights the significant action and investment already undertaken so that the experience of homelessness is rare and short-lived in Victoria.

These initiatives already deliver on many of the Inquiry's recommendations, and the recommendations will continue to guide the Victorian Government's continued action in this area.

Responses to each of the 51 recommendations are detailed in the next section.

Response to Recommendations

Guide to the responses:

<p>This response has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Submissions and Responses to Inquiries. The following key sets out the five categories of response, which are consistent with the Guidelines.</p> <p>Key</p>	
Support in Full	All elements of the recommendation are supported.
Support in Part	Some elements of the recommendation are supported.
Support in Principle	The Victorian Government generally supports the intent or merit of the policy underlining the recommendation but does not necessarily support the method for achieving the policy.
Under review	Further analysis is required for the Victorian Government to determine its position (when possible, estimated expected timeframes for the review and/or implementation should be included in the response).
Not support	The Victorian Government does not support the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>1. That the Victorian Government, in collaboration with the housing and homelessness sector, explore ways to improve the accurate recording of the number of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria, particularly in relation to transitory or recurring cases of homelessness.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government will seek to continuously improve data capturing and recording, in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, local councils and homelessness agencies.</p> <p>The Australian Bureau of Statistics is primarily responsible for the accurate recording of the number of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria, via the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. For the 2021 Census a range of administrative improvements were put in place, including Victoria sharing Victoria's Rooming House Register that includes addresses for registered rooming houses. This allowed the Australian Bureau of Statistics to better identify and count rooming house residents for the homelessness count, giving Victoria greater accuracy and insights that previous Censuses.</p> <p>The Victorian Government collects service usage data from homelessness agencies and is committed to ensuring this data is as accurate as possible to combine with Census information to inform service responses.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has also invested in analytical assets that link de-identified departmental and agency data to predict service user trajectories. These assets, which are being built progressively, will give new insights into Victorians experiencing homelessness and inform design and evaluation of better targeted interventions to prevent chronic homelessness.</p> <p>At a local level, people sleeping rough are counted via the biennial Rough Sleeping count in inner Melbourne.</p>
<p>2. That the Victorian Government undertake comprehensive mapping of services to ascertain gaps and overlaps in service delivery across Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing works closely and continuously with the homelessness sector to understand gaps and overlaps in service delivery as well as opportunities for improvement and reform across Victoria.</p> <p>The Minister for Housing and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing regularly draws upon the expertise of members of the homelessness and related sectors, as well as people with lived experience of homelessness, including through advisory groups, to identify and provide advice on solutions to service gaps and priorities for system reform.</p> <p>The Victorian Government designed local area service networks enable local service delivery coordination and multi-agency collaboration. Through this collaboration, the networks identify, highlight and respond to local service delivery gaps.</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the local area service networks to fulfil their role in multiple ways. It funds a local networker position in each network to support multi-agency collaboration. It also provides regular data reports from the Homelessness Data Collection to help the networks understand the profile, flow and outcomes of service users and target groups in their area.</p> <p>Victoria's Specialist Homelessness Information Platform also hosts a vacancy management system that assists local homelessness service coordination by allowing providers within the local area service networks to advertise available supports and accommodation when vacancies exist. This is complemented by an electronic referral form on the platform to support quick and efficient referrals.</p> <p>As highlighted in response to recommendation 1, the Victorian Government has also invested in analytical assets that link de-identified departmental and agency data to predict service user trajectories. This will give new insights to system performance, gaps and improved design of targeted service responses.</p>
<p>3. That the Victorian Government embed flexibility into its approach to the funding of homelessness programs.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>More tailored and flexible approaches to providing support to meet people's needs have been gradually introduced and embedded into Victoria's homelessness response.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>This flexibility should extend to the amount of time an individual receives support and the services they are eligible to receive.</p>	<p>Most recent has been the introduction of the From Homelessness to a Home and Homes for Families programs, which provide people experiencing rough sleeping and recurring homelessness with stable accommodation and flexible multi-disciplinary support that is tailored to their needs with health, mental health and drug and alcohol support where needed. To date more than 2,000 households and families have benefited from this tailored support and around 1,200 households and families continue to be supported to build their connections and capability to remain stably housed over the long term.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is also investing in eight supportive housing facilities (four are currently operational) that provide a permanent home with on-site flexible multidisciplinary support for people for as long as they need. These facilities provide support for a range of different people, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, people over the age of 50 at risk of homelessness and women and children facing multiple challenges, including rebuilding their lives after surviving family violence.</p> <p>There are many other examples of more recently introduced contemporary homelessness services that allow a greater degree of flexibility and tailoring, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of therapeutic responses into four large metropolitan congregate crisis accommodation facilities that allow adults to stay longer and receive tailored recovery support • the introduction of the Private Rental Assistance Program Plus and expansion of the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program, which has tailored flexible support to households who need support as well as financial assistance to stabilise their situation in the private rental market • the continued investment in evolving the highly successful, outcome-driven Journey to Social Inclusion program, which provides intensive wrap-around support and head-leased properties to people facing long-term homelessness. • investment in expanding the Partnerships Addressing Disadvantage initiative to include a focus on solutions to address homelessness. <p>The development and introduction of flexible, tailored and outcome-driven responses to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness continues. The government is also working with the homelessness sector on reforms to the current homelessness service system to introduce more flexibility into current funding arrangements and adopt more contemporary, outcomes-focused service responses.</p>
<p>4. That the Victorian Government have regard for services that are multi-disciplinary when commissioning services, particularly in regional areas.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan highlighted the importance of multi-disciplinary support for people with experiences of long-term homelessness and rough sleeping. This approach underpins Victoria's specialist homelessness service system, has been a feature of multiple recent initiatives and will continue to be incorporated into future service design.</p> <p>There are many recent examples of investments in homelessness services that are multi-disciplinary including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Homelessness Flood Recovery Program, which was established in the regional areas of Goulburn, Loddon and Mallee in October 2022 to respond to the Victorian Floods and provide support to households with complex needs who have been impacted by the floods. This includes intensive, multidisciplinary case management for individuals who experienced homelessness before the floods by establishing medium- to long-term housing and returning flood-displaced social housing tenants to their property. • as outlined in response to recommendation 3 the Victorian Government is also investing in eight supportive housing facilities that provide longer-term accommodation with on-site flexible multidisciplinary support. These facilities provide support to a range of different people, including people experiencing chronic homelessness, people over the age of 50 at risk of homelessness and women and children facing

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
	<p>multiple challenges, including rebuilding their lives after surviving family violence. This investment will fund the construction of two regional facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the H3 Alliance of health, housing and homelessness organisations working together, to address homelessness in the expanding Wyndham growth corridor by increasing access to housing supply, providing outreach, transitional, legal and health support and capacity building • the Congregate Crisis Supported Accommodation program which includes on-site delivery of essential health and addiction services at four congregate crisis accommodation facilities, to help treat the underlying complex and diverse causes of people's homelessness, including alcohol and other drug treatment and mental health and chronic health treatment. <p>As outlined in response to recommendation 2, the Victorian Government designed local area service networks enable local service delivery coordination and facilitate multi-disciplinary approaches.</p> <p>Other notable Victorian Government initiatives that promote and support multi-disciplinary support include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Victorian Government's suite of programs built on Housing First principles, including the From Homelessness to a Home, Homes for Families, Journey to Social Inclusion programs and the suite of new and continuing supportive housing facilities which require coordinated multi-disciplinary and collaborative responses across and within services and geographical areas in Victoria • the landmark \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build will construct more than 2,000 homes for Victorians with intensive mental health needs, which will be delivered as supported accommodation places under reforms emerging from the Mental Health Royal Commission.
<p>5. That the Victorian Government support more coordination, collaboration, and integration between homelessness services.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Victoria's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan emphasised the importance of integration and collaboration to address homelessness. This approach underpins Victoria's specialist homelessness service system and has been a feature of multiple recent initiatives.</p> <p>As outlined in response to recommendation 2, the Victorian Government designed local area service networks enable local service delivery coordination and multi-agency collaboration. The government funds a local networker position in each local area service network, provides regular local area data reports and has enabled a vacancy management system on the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform to support this multi-agency coordination and collaboration.</p> <p>Other notable Victorian Government initiatives that promote and support coordination, collaboration and integration between homelessness services and across sectors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for Frankston Zero through the 2023-24 Victorian State Budget. Frankston Zero takes a holistic coordinated approach to addressing rough sleeping in local areas. • the Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative, which is a partnership between Homes Victoria and the Department of Health and involves funding nine specialist youth dual diagnosis practitioners across the state. These workers assist young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have also have mental health and/or alcohol and other drug issues to get the support they need. The 2023-24 Victorian State Budget boosted this initiative by providing \$1.35 million to continue the service. • the Victorian Government's suite of programs built on Housing First principles, including the From Homelessness to a Home, Homes for Families Programs, Journey to Social Inclusion programs and the suite of new and continuing supportive housing facilities, which require coordinated multi-disciplinary and collaborative responses across and within services and geographical areas in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing's Transitional Housing Management joined up initiatives, which have been designed to prevent people becoming homeless as they transition out of other government services and systems. Joined up initiatives are currently in place with adult and youth justice, mental health and disability, alcohol and drug, out of home care and family violence systems. over multiple years, the Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne have partnered to coordinate multiple services for people sleeping rough in Melbourne's central business district. This initiative supports coordination of multiple agencies, ranging from housing, health, police and other justice agencies, philanthropy, volunteer-run services and the private sector to help people out of homelessness and keep them housed.
<p>6. That the Victorian Government build on its policy of considering outcome-based service goals when commissioning, or re-commissioning homelessness services. These service goals should include the provision of additional subsidies for individuals with more complex needs.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's outcomes framework underpins the Victorian Government's approach and investment to address homelessness in Victoria.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Early Intervention Investment Framework packages are also linking targeted new government investments (including several recent new homelessness initiatives) to quantifiable impact, to improve life outcomes for individuals and reduce pressure on acute services, so that avoided costs are reinvested back into the broader social system.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's recent investments, in the From Homelessness to a Home and Homes for Families programs and supportive housing facilities have been designed to focus on outcomes and funded to allow for varying levels of complexity.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's recent commitment for continued funding for essential therapeutic health and addiction services at four congregate crisis accommodation facilities will also shape and embed innovative practice frameworks, outcome measurements, streamlined funding and reporting.</p> <p>Initiatives such as Journey to Social Inclusion, which provides clients with support to sustain their housing, gain training and employment and establish stronger social connections, reports on and is funded against housing stability and health system performance measures.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is also investing in enablers that will support development and funding of evidence-informed, outcome-focused services. Investment in analytical assets that link de-identified departmental and agency data (as outlined in response to recommendation 1) will give new insights to Victorians experiencing homelessness, informing design and evaluation of better targeted interventions to prevent chronic homelessness.</p>
<p>7. That the Victorian Government prioritise early intervention activities at the first point of contact with the homelessness system in recognition of the need to shift away from a crisis-oriented response and assist at-risk persons to avoid entering homelessness, including by:</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Victoria's over 70 entry points to specialist homelessness services and dedicated initial assessment and planning workers provide the first point of contact for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan signalled the Victorian Government's focus on intervening early to prevent homelessness. Since that time, the Victorian Government has made a series of investments to bolster capacity to respond, and intervene early where possible, to around 100,000 Victorians seeking assistance from the specialist homelessness service system every year.</p> <p>These initiatives have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing investment in additional initial assessment and planning workers and enhanced housing pathways workers as part of the Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative. This investment bolsters the system's capacity to assess, plan and respond to Victorians in need

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing further resources to entry points for additional Initial Assessment and Planning workers • ensuring that early intervention programs receive further resourcing to meet demand from people attending entry points. 	<p>of homelessness assistance as well as working to prevent exits into homelessness from correctional facilities (which is further addressed in response to recommendations 8, 22 and 24).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding to design and deliver an Aboriginal-specific homelessness entry point pilot, providing a culturally safe service option for First peoples needing homelessness support. This will help redirect some pressure on Victoria's existing homelessness entry points. A self-determined First People's service response will support early intervention and respond to the overrepresentation of Victoria's First Peoples in the homelessness service system. • funding for the LGBTIQ+ Homelessness Support Service to provide early intervention to LGBTIQ+ people who face challenges accessing housing, including young people. The program is currently operating and is helping prevent and address homelessness by supporting services to improve the safety of LGBTIQ+ people and strengthen connections between specialist homelessness services system entry points and LGBTIQ+ support services. • ongoing funding for the Private Rental Assistance and the Private Rental Assistance Plus Programs and expansion of the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program, each of which provide a vital early intervention response. More detail on these programs is covered in response to recommendations 11, 12 and 13. • additional funding for the Homelessness After Hours Service to deliver 24 hours a day, seven days a week response to people in urgent need of help to manage accommodation risks. • significant investment in assertive outreach and supportive housing teams to engage and end the cycle of homelessness for people sleeping rough. • funding for Home Stretch, which is available for all eligible young care leavers and young people transitioning from permanent care orders to enable them to remain with their carers or transition to suitable housing options.
<p>8. That the Victorian Government implement measures to prioritise outreach to other institutions outside the homelessness sector for the purposes of early intervention including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engaging with bodies and institutions that are the first to know when individuals are at risk of homelessness to assist them to identify and respond to risk factors for homelessness, including through education and training 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Victoria's over 70 entry points to specialist homelessness services and dedicated initial assessment and planning workers provide the first point of contact for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These entry points are complemented by a range of initiatives that support partnerships with institutions and industries that can identify early risks of homelessness, including real estate agents, Victoria's prison system, alcohol and other drug providers and mental health services.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's suite of private rental assistance programs have enabled homelessness services to build strong partnerships with real estate agents. This partnership not only assists in identifying new rental opportunities but also gives real estate agents a referral option when they identify tenants at risk.</p> <p>Through the Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative 11 initial assessment and planning officers in-reach to all Victorian prisons to help identify and respond to risks of homelessness. This initiative complements the Department of Justice and Community Safety's suite of transitional programs to prevent exits to homelessness, including the Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Program which connects young people exiting detention and are at high risk of homelessness to relevant services and supports.</p> <p>The new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (the Locals) and reformed Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Area Services) are also being designed to identify risks of homelessness early and forge referral pathways. Consistent with Mental Health Royal Commission's recommendations, the Locals and Area Services will screen people for additional risks and needs, including homelessness, so they can be connected to relevant supports.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supporting homelessness services to build strong relationships and referral pathways with institutions that are first to know when individuals are at risk of homelessness. 	<p>There are also a range of initiatives that seek to identify homelessness risks by people accessing alcohol and other drug programs. The Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative funds nine specialist youth dual diagnosis practitioners across the state. These workers assist young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have also have mental health and/or alcohol and other drug issues to get the support they need. Alcohol and Other Drugs services also currently screen people at intake and assessment for homelessness risk and commence discharge planning at intake to link people early to housing services to minimise the risk of exit to homelessness from treatment.</p>
<p>9. That the Victorian Government provide ongoing funding for the family violence Flexible Support Packages program.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Flexible Support Packages aim to deliver personalised and holistic responses to assist adult and child victim survivors experiencing family violence to transition from crisis, and establish long-term sustainable arrangements to improve their safety, wellbeing and independence in recovery from family violence.</p> <p>Individualised packages provide flexible brokerage to victim survivors to purchase a range of tailored and practical supports based on their case management/support plan. This may include counselling, wellbeing, education, employment, financial counselling, transport, housing stability, financial security, and other practical or material needs.</p> <p>Ongoing funding was allocated for family violence Flexible Support Packages in the 2020-21 State Budget. The Flexible Support Packages program is regularly reviewed and monitored to gauge overall demand and identified areas of need. A Flexible Support Packages Portal was fully implemented in January 2022. The portal will enable more detailed analysis of the demand for the packages and how the funding is applied. Guidelines for this program were also revised in late 2021 which will contribute to the value of the program.</p>
<p>10. That the Victorian Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fund research into the incidence of homelessness amongst perpetrators of family violence in Victoria increase funding for family violence programs that focus on perpetrator interventions, trial and evaluate the effectiveness of programs that provide supported accommodation for perpetrators of family violence, linked to compulsory behavioural change programs, 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria, together with Respect Victoria, has developed a whole of Victorian Government family violence reform research agenda and program. The research agenda and program articulates the Victorian Government's research priorities for family violence and is aligned with the family violence reform priorities contained in the Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020-2023. The priorities in the 2020-23 Rolling Action Plan include building the evidence on perpetrators and people who use violence.</p> <p>The Victorian Government funded three research projects under the first phase of the Family Violence Research Program 2021-2024 to help build the evidence regarding what works to respond to people who use violence.</p> <p>Perpetrator interventions research is also one of Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) research themes. The 2022-23 State Budget provided \$1.1 million over two years to continue Victoria's contribution to ANROWS.</p> <p>The whole-of-Victorian Government Theory of Change and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for perpetrator accountability will provide a framework for evaluating the perpetrator work program building evidence aligned to the perpetrator outcomes of the Family Violence Outcomes Framework. This evidence will support future investment considerations. Victoria is committed to expanding the suite of responses to perpetrators and is evaluating the Serious-risk perpetrator pilot and accommodation-based responses to build the evidence base around systemic interventions.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
including in regional areas.	
<p>11. That the Victorian Government ensure ongoing funding for the Private Rental Assistance Program in recognition of its key role in preventing entry into homelessness and that the funding grows to meet demand.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government’s suite of Private Rental Assistance Programs have been assisting more than 13,000 people per year, including around 500 people through the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program per year.</p> <p>Through the 2021-22 State Budget, the Victorian Government committed ongoing funding enabling continuation of the Private Rental Assistance and Private Rental Assistance Plus Programs and expansion of the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program, delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.</p> <p>Through this investment, funded organisations have collectively been able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employ more than 40 private rental brokers who generate and help maintain private rental opportunities and • around 30 private rental support workers who provide outreach and support to households that need practical support to establish or maintain their housing • flexibly use the significant brokerage funding to maintain and establish tenancies, including purchasing furniture, appliances, removalist or utility connections. <p>In addition, Victoria’s Housing Statement increases protections of renters’ rights. This includes introducing a portable rental bond scheme; extending notice of rent increases and notice to vacate periods to 90 days; and introducing mandatory continuing professional development for real estate agents, property managers, owner’s corporation managers and conveyancers.</p> <p>A \$2 million Rental Stress Support Package, through the Victorian Property Fund, will also help to address the high demand for rental assistance from organisations who work to prevent homelessness and help renters to stay in their homes.</p>
<p>12. That the Victorian Government consider the barriers faced by young people, persons experiencing family violence and other groups in relation to difficulties entering or remaining in the private rental market in continued development of the Private Rental Assistance Program, with a view to making the service more accessible for these cohorts.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government’s suite of Private Rental Assistance programs have been assisting more than 13,000 people per year, including around 500 Aboriginal people per year through the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program.</p> <p>The flexible nature of these programs has allowed providers to assist hundreds of families escaping family violence and young people each year.</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises that many cohorts experience unique barriers to accessing and retaining accommodation in the private rental market. These cohorts include but are not limited to young people, victim-survivors of family violence, First Peoples and people experiencing mental health issues.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance program and Private Rental Assistance Plus Program were designed to improve government’s original private rental assistance program and better support people who experience additional and unique barriers in the private rental market. Both programs enhance the capacity to help young people, families escaping family violence, people with mental ill-health and others to thrive in the private rental market.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
	<p>Following a recommendation of Mana-na Woorn-tyeen Maar-takoort - Every Aboriginal Person has a Home: The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies delivered the Aboriginal Private Rental Access Project report and recommendations. The recommendations were endorsed by the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group Koori Caucus and a joint government and Aboriginal community working group has been established to implement the recommendations.</p>
<p>13. That the Victorian Government provide additional and ongoing funding for the Private Rental Assistance Plus program to ensure the program can continue to grow to meet demand.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The 2021-22 State Budget committed ongoing funding to continue the Private Rental Assistance and Private Rental Assistance Plus Programs and expand the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program.</p> <p>The Private Rental Assistance Plus Program continues to play an important role as part of the government's suite of programs to support more people with low to medium practical support needs to enter and stay in the private rental market.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program has been expanded to a further four locations, across, Bayside Peninsula, Outer Gippsland, Goulburn, and Brimbank Melton in addition to the current five locations across Gippsland, Loddon, Mallee, North Eastern Melbourne and Western Melbourne areas. The expansion locations were self-determined by First Peoples communities through the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum.</p>
<p>14. That the Victorian Government promote collaborative practice arrangements between mental health and homelessness services, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make the homelessness and mental health systems easier for individuals to navigate • ensure early identification of individuals experiencing mental illness who need support. 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan (Action Plan) emphasised the importance of coordination across housing, health and other support services to better meet individuals' needs. As part of the Action Plan, the Victorian Government established nine assertive outreach teams and six supportive housing teams, bringing together homelessness, mental health and other supports to assist people end their experiences of rough sleeping and recurring homelessness.</p> <p>Since that time, the Victorian Government has continued to recognise the critical importance of collaboration and coordination across the homelessness, housing, mental health and other disciplines and sectors. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Victorian Government's Housing First-focused initiatives, such as From Homelessness to a Home, Homes for Families Journey to Social Inclusion and permanent supportive housing facilities, embed collaboration and coordination across housing, homelessness, mental health, health and other related system as part of their practice models. • the recent 2023-24 Victorian State Budget provided funds to continue the Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative, which facilitates coordination between the youth homelessness and health sectors. • Victoria's Private Rental Assistance Plus and Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Programs provide practical support and coordination across services, including mental health supports, to assist people remain in the private rental market. Further details of these programs are in recommendations 11, 12 and 13. • recent investment in 2,000 new supported accommodation homes for Victorians with intensive mental health needs as part of the Big Housing Build and in alignment with recommendations from the Mental Health Royal Commission. <p>Another significant and notable development that will support cross sector coordination are the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (the Locals) and reformed Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Area Services). Consistent with the Mental Health Royal Commission's recommendations, the Locals and Area Services will screen people for additional risks and needs, including homelessness, so they can be</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
	connected to relevant supports. In the case of the Locals, referral and connection may include the broad array of services and wellbeing supports, such as financial counselling and legal assistance, that can prevent risks of homelessness.
15. That the Victorian Government investigate methods to tailor the Private Rental Assistance Program Plus to provide appropriate and effective services to people experiencing diverse mental health issues.	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The response to recommendations 11, 12 and 13 outline continuous improvements the Victorian Government has made to improve private rental assistance and the support the Private Rental Assistance Program Plus is providing people with mental health issues to enter and stay in the private rental market. In 2021-22, over 500 Private Rental Assistance Program Plus recipients experienced mental health issues and were supported through the program, representing one third of all people provided with these supports.</p> <p>There are also a range of boutique programs across Victoria supporting young people with emerging and diagnosed mental health issues to enter and remain in the private rental market. Insights from these programs and their providers will continue to inform government thinking on continuous improvement of the private rental assistance products.</p>
16. That the Victorian Government investigate and provide additional funding for homelessness early intervention services for young people that seek to address family conflict issues.	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of effective family based early intervention programs in supporting young people and mitigating risks of homelessness. It has funded a range of initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four-year funding to continue the Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy programs targeting young people in youth justice. and providing an intensive, evidence-based assertive outreach model to keep families together and reduce involvement with justice and Child Protection. • continuation and expansion of Adolescent Family Violence in the Home services until June 2025 and provide brokerage funding to support adolescents using violence in the home and their families. This expansion has been complemented by development and implementation of a new model of care for the program to support early and therapeutic interventions for young people using violence in the home and their families. • funding has also allocated to four Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across five Department of Families, Fairness and Housing areas to continue to deliver First Peoples led and community designed approaches to Adolescent Family Violence in the Home. • the Putting Families First initiative to trial a model that uses an interdisciplinary, whole of family approach to support justice-involved families with multiple interactions across social, health and justice services. The initiative is currently being trialled in Brimbank Melton and Goulburn areas and is testing: targeted evidence-informed practice modules, including adolescent self-regulation, and parental efficacy; dedicated interdisciplinary functions, including housing and specialist family violence, and; dedicated housing brokerage. • significant investment to reduce First Peoples overrepresentation in child protection and family services by supporting stronger families and transforming the children and families service system, expand the Aboriginal Children in Care program, support First Peoples-led family services and early intervention, and expand the Community Protecting Boorais trial, aimed at benefiting up to 348 children by 2026-27. Funding to extend an Early Help Family Services trial, supporting over 3,000 families per year, and working alongside universal services to address parenting challenges and build parenting capacity to reduce the need for more intensive services <p>The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Department of Justice and Community Safety continue to work together to deliver a coordinated approach to early identification of young people experiencing family conflict and effective connection to the right service response.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
<p>17. That the Victorian Government conduct an assessment of suitability for additional Education First Youth Foyer sites in metropolitan and regional areas, with a view to providing funding for additional facilities.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government currently invests to support 120 young people at any one time to engage in education and build living skills across three Education First Youth Foyers, located in Shepparton, Glen Waverley and Broadmeadows. As the Committee has recognised, these evidence-based services play an important role in assisting young people at risk of homelessness to build the skills to be independent and thrive in adulthood.</p> <p>In February 2023, the Victorian Government announced an investment of \$50 million in youth housing through the Youth Capital Grants program within the Big Housing Build investment. This funding will deliver over 130 homes across Victoria for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Two Education First Youth Foyers will be constructed through the Youth Capital Grants program. When completed, these facilities will provide homes and support to 81 young people in the regional Victorian locations of Wangaratta and Wodonga.</p>
<p>18. That the Victorian Government provide additional funding to organisations that provide innovative accommodation for young people at their family home such as Kids Under Cover.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of ensuring services for young people at risk of homelessness intervene early and divert people from homelessness.</p> <p>The Kids Under Cover studios are relocatable one or two-bedroom semi-self-contained units that are placed in the backyards of existing properties to address overcrowding and to support young people to remain with their care givers, reducing the risk of homelessness. The Kids Under Cover studios program is an example of an intervention that assists young people to remain in or near to the family home where it is safe for them to do so, so they can remain connected to family and community. In 2021 the Victorian Government provided \$6.5 million in funding for approximately 80 new portable studios delivered through the Kids Under Cover organisation that will help address the critical housing need for young people involved in, or at risk of contact with the justice system. The 2023-24 Victorian Budget commits further funding to the Kids Under Cover Studio program to support young people at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>The Victorian Government invested over \$360 million in 2021-22 on homelessness services with over \$65 million supporting young Victorians. This funding delivers 22 youth crisis refuges, 13 supported accommodation sites, assessment and planning services, a youth-specific entry point, support, and brokerage for accommodation and family reconciliation.</p> <p>Additionally, the Victorian Government invested in a range of additional youth programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Village 21 Preston program to deliver youth related homelessness support services, and is expanding this to Mooroopna, Frankston and Bairnsdale. • the Holmesglen Education First Youth Foyer to support young people by providing diversion from homelessness services and education support • the Homelessness Youth Dual Diagnosis Initiative to co-locate eight clinicians to deliver support to young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have substance abuse and mental health issues • Hope Street Youth and Family Services received funding to deliver mobile outreach services to youth. This service will operate alongside Hope Street's existing First Response Youth Foyer in Melton. <p>Additionally, the following investments will contribute to the range of accommodation options for young Victorians and help prevent pathways into homelessness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Capital Grants will provide supported housing options for at least 130 young people • \$11.2 million in the 2021-22 State Budget to fund accommodation for young people leaving care and youth justice

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more than \$535 million towards giving children in residential care the support they need – with a safe and secure place to call home and specialised care for their social and emotional wellbeing. <p>In addition to the initiatives above, young people are supported through other programs provided by the Victorian Government including access to the Private Rental Accommodation Program and the Private Rental Accommodation Program Plus which are outlined in the responses to recommendations 11 and 12.</p>
<p>19. That the Victorian Government provide funding and support for the expansion of initiatives linked to the Community of Schools and Services model, with a minimum expansion to seven pilot sites that will include four metropolitan sites and three regional sites.</p>	<p>Under review</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the Community of Schools and Services model currently operating through The Geelong Project and recognises the importance of place-based models for early intervention to address youth homelessness.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has continued its support for The Geelong Project through the 2022-2023 State Budget, building on previous investment in 2018-19 and 2020-21. This funding enables The Geelong Project to support seven participating schools in the Barwon area.</p>
<p>20. That the Victorian Government commit funding for programs that assist young people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness to receive job readiness training and connect them with employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government has committed \$35.1 million to Jobs Victoria Mentors over two years, to support disadvantaged jobseekers in Victoria to improve their labour market outcomes. This program will reduce barriers to employment for jobseekers in areas experiencing entrenched disadvantage. This includes young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Jobs Victoria partners are part of a holistic network who have contacts at housing and homelessness services and can provide referrals to meet the needs of these clients and support them into work.</p>
<p>21. That the Victorian Government explore opportunities to include more social enterprises that work with people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness in their social procurement policy. Such social enterprises should include a work readiness component in</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the unique role social enterprises play in creating inclusive employment opportunities and delivering social benefit to the Victorian community. Social enterprises are demonstrating the value created by supporting disadvantaged people into work opportunities, including people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In October 2021, the Victorian Government launched a new Social Enterprise Strategy 2021-25, which builds on the success of Victoria's first Social Enterprise Strategy which was launched in 2017.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE
their employment programs.	
<p>22. That the Victorian Government provide additional transitional housing for people leaving custodial settings. In addition, that the Victorian Government ensure access to housing support workers and integrated legal support both before and after release to assist persons to access and maintain stable, long-term housing.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The 2023-24 State Budget provided ongoing funding to continue the Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative, which assists people in prison access initial assessment and planning workers prior to their release and enhanced housing pathways workers based in the community to help break the cycle of homelessness and contact with the justice system. This initiative provides people with access to emergency accommodation, housing information, support, and referrals to specialist homelessness services before they exit prison.</p> <p>The Department of Family, Fairness and Housing's Transitional Housing Management joined up initiatives have been designed to prevent people becoming homeless as they transition out of other government services and systems. Joined up initiatives are currently in place with the adult and youth justice as well as mental health and disability, alcohol and drug, out of home care and family violence systems.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Community Safety also deliver a suite of transitional programs to prevent exits to homelessness by people leaving custodial settings. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Program which connects young people exiting detention and are at high risk of homelessness to relevant services and supports. • post-release support programs that include brokerage for post-release accommodation and other support needs • dedicated transitional properties and facilities for people exiting correctional settings, including the Maribyrnong community residential facility for men involved in the justice system and at risk of homelessness • the Women's Justice Diversionary Program, which diverts women from the corrections system by providing housing support <p>The Building Works Housing Maintenance Stimulus Package included up to \$50 million for justice housing to support positive housing outcomes for people with recent contact with the justice system, including exiting prison. This investment will create 250 beds across 16 projects in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Most of the projects are complete or nearing completion with the program expected to be completed by end of-2023 and include housing options to meet the needs of women with children, Aboriginal men and people requiring drug and alcohol treatment.</p>
<p>23. That the Victorian Government investigate whether greater access to supported accommodation is required for people seeking bail, and whether this would lead to a reduction of individuals on remand.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Community Safety will work to consider ways to divert people from custody by ensuring that policies, programs and services are available to support people in the community, including through bail support programs and access to housing.</p> <p>In the 2023-24 Victorian State Budget, the Government invested further in the expansion of the Court Integrated Services Program, a bail support program which assists participants to address underlying needs such as homelessness. The expansion of these services will provide greater access to the Court Integrated Services Program, including assistance in obtaining accommodation to facilitate bail.</p>

<p>24. That the Victorian Government pursue a 'no exits into homelessness' policy to improve discharge practices at mental health, hospital, rehabilitation, aged care and other institutional settings. To improve discharge planning, the following measures should be put in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of partnerships and pathways with housing and homelessness services, including early referrals prior to discharge • collection of discharge data and reporting against targets aiming for a reduction of discharges into homelessness • training for staff in institutional settings, particularly in areas with high homeless populations, to better identify and respond to the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness, including -training staff to record housing status as part of admission to prevent or identify risks of discharging individuals into homelessness. 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government invests in a range of initiatives designed to prevent 'exits to homelessness' from other government settings. Responses to recommendation 8, has highlighted initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Corrections Housing Pathways Initiative which locates initial assessment and planning officers in all Victorian prisons to help identify and respond to risks of homelessness. • The Department of Justice and Community Safety's suite of transitional programs to prevent exits to homelessness, which include the Youth Justice Homelessness Assistance Program, the Women's Justice Diversionary Program and post-release support, brokerage and dedicated transitional properties. These initiatives are detailed further in response to recommendation 22. • Alcohol and Other Drugs services screen people at intake and assessment for homelessness risk and commence discharge planning at intake to link people early to housing services to minimise the risk of exit from treatment in to homelessness. • the reformed Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Area Services) are also being designed to identify risks of homelessness early and forge referral pathways to minimise risks that people are exited into homelessness. • the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing's Transitional Housing Management's joined up initiatives also have been designed to prevent people becoming homeless as they transition out of other government services and systems, including correctional settings. Joined up initiatives are currently in place with the adult and youth justice systems as well as the mental health and disability, alcohol and drug, out of home care and family violence systems. <p>The Victorian Government's Better Futures and Home Stretch programs support young people leaving statutory care with accommodation and support to prevent these young people exiting into homelessness. This investment has been complemented by several government funded capital initiatives, including Village 21 in Preston and two new sites being funded under the recent \$50 million Youth Capital Grants, which target young people leaving care.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's investment in 2,000 supported housing places for adults with a mental illness through the Big Housing Build will also go some way to ensuring that Victorian's who are at risk of homelessness as they straddle mental health and housing and homelessness systems do not exit to homelessness.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has also invested in the Pathways to Home program to assist patients in hospital who live with a disability to be discharged to a home or home-like accommodation when they are waiting for permanent accommodation through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. After a successful pilot in Melbourne, the program is being expanded with 13 metropolitan and seven regional services planning to participate in the program. This program operates alongside The Summer Foundation, which works in partnership with health services and disability providers to ensure the availability of appropriate transitional accommodation.</p>
---	---

<p>25. That the Victorian Government introduce legislative provisions for Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal compliance orders in respect of residential tenancies to be time limited where appropriate.</p>	<p>Not support</p> <p>This approach was considered as part of the Fairer, Safer Housing review. However, it was not included as part of recent residential tenancy reforms in favour of introducing a 'reasonable and proportionate' test that the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal must consider when determining applications for possession. This approach to determining applications for possession provides the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with the discretion to consider the context surrounding any breach of duty by a renter. Section 330A of the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> requires VCAT to consider a range of specified matters for the purposes of determining whether it is reasonable and proportionate to make a possession order, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature, frequency, and duration of the conduct of the renter which led to the notice to vacate being given, including whether the conduct is a recurring breach of obligations under a residential tenancy agreement • whether the breach is trivial • whether the breach was caused by the conduct of any person other than the renter, and • whether the breach has been remedied as far as practicable.
<p>26. That the Victorian Government amend the content of the Notice to Vacate form for tenants of rented premises to provide information about legal rights and details of legal assistance services with the notice.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of renters' awareness of, and access to, free legal services. New Notices to Vacate have been in effect from 29 March 2021 and include more information about seeking assistance and challenging a Notice. The new notices require a rental provider to specify the reason they are ending the rental agreement and provide supporting evidence when issuing a notice to vacate for change of use.</p> <p>Additional changes to the Notice to Vacate to set out details of legal assistance services requires further amendments to the Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021, as the Notice to Vacate is a prescribed form. The Department of Government Services will consider this recommendation as part of a post-implementation review of the 2021 rental reforms.</p>
<p>27. That the Victorian Government provide additional funding with a view to expanding the provision of tenancy-focused legal supports for tenants involved in residential tenancy proceedings at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of renters, particularly those who are experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage, being provided access to supports when experiencing rental issues and facing homelessness.</p> <p>The Department of Government Services currently funds the Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program that provides a range of services to tenants in these circumstances, including referral to other support services, information and advice, negotiation with rental providers and estate agencies, and advocacy and support in Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearings.</p> <p>The Department of Government Services is undertaking a review of the Tenancy Assistance and Advocacy Program in the 2023-24 financial year and will consider this recommendation further in that context. Outcomes of the review will inform future service model design and program structure.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Community Safety also funds legal service providers through its legal assistance program to provide general, broad-ranging legal assistance services for people with renting issues.</p> <p>In addition, in Victoria's Housing Statement, the Victorian Government committed to delivering a \$2 million Rental Stress Support Package through the Victorian Property Fund, to help address the current high demand for rental assistance from organisations who work to prevent homelessness and help renters stay in their homes.</p>

<p>28. That the Victorian Government review the merits of an internal appeals process at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for residential tenancy matters. Such a review should have regard for whether an internal appeals process would result in cost savings for the Government and parties by reducing the need to appeal to the Supreme Court.</p>	<p>Not support</p> <p>The Victorian Government has previously considered the merits of an internal review process, through both the Access to Justice Review conducted in 2016 and the Fairer, Safer Housing Review of the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> in 2017.</p> <p>The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal currently has processes in place for re-hearing matters in certain circumstances where a party did not appear and was not represented at hearing. In addition, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal monitors the satisfaction of customers via its Customer Satisfaction Survey and has internal mechanisms to support the continuing professional development of members to support fair decision making.</p>
<p>29. That the Victorian Government develop and implement a Protocol for Victoria Police and other enforcement agencies to use in responding to people experiencing homelessness, which would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid unnecessary, enforcement-based interactions with people experiencing homelessness • ensure that where interactions do occur, they are appropriate and respectful • support enforcement officers to use their discretion and consider alternative options to fines and charges when interacting with people experiencing 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports providing clear guidance to enforcement agencies about the treatment of vulnerable Victorians, including those experiencing homelessness, to meet the objectives of recommendation 29.</p> <p>This recommendation aligns with recommendations made by the Fines Reform Advisory Board in its 2020 Report on the Delivery of Fines Reform which included improving access and outcomes for the state's most vulnerable fine recipients.</p> <p>Under the <i>Infringements Act 2006</i> the Attorney-General is empowered to make binding Guidelines for enforcement agencies, which can include a model code of conduct to apply to enforcement agencies and officers who issue fines.</p> <p>The Guidelines have recently been revised and encourage enforcement agencies to develop a code of conduct that ensures issuing officers are sensitive to circumstances such as homelessness in their interactions and have regard to these circumstances before exercising enforcement action. The Guidelines contain a model code of conduct and recognise that the use of discretion and determining necessary and appropriate enforcement actions are matters for independent enforcement agencies.</p> <p>Recommendation 29 is also consistent with recommendation 10 of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System that, where possible, emergency services' response to people experiencing mental health crises should be led by health professionals rather than police.</p> <p>It also aligns with a number of other reforms that focus on improving the justice system response for vulnerable cohorts, such as the expansion of the Court Integrated Services Program.</p>

<p>homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • train and equip enforcement officers to make referrals to appropriate services as an alternative to fines and charges. 	
<p>30. That in repealing the offence of public drunkenness from the <i>Summary Offences Act 1966</i> (Vic), the Victorian Government create an appropriate public health response model in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the homelessness sector.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>In February 2021, the Parliament passed the <i>Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Act 2021</i> to decriminalise public drunkenness shifting the focus toward providing health support for people who are drunk in public.</p>
<p>31. That the Magistrates Court consider investigating the need for retention of the Special Circumstances list or establishment of a Homelessness list.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>Any decisions to reinstate or establish specific case lists are for the Magistrates' Court which operates independently from the Victorian Government.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has expanded the Court Integrated Services Program and the Drug Court, which are programs commonly accessed by accused experiencing homelessness. These expansions received a further \$18.6 million in the 2023-24 State Budget to continue to June 2024, providing greater access to the Court Integrated Services Program and the Drug Court to more people across Victoria.</p> <p>In addition, the Victorian Government is working to implement or further consider recommendations of the Fines Reform Advisory Board (Advisory Board) to improve outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged fine recipients, including people experiencing homelessness. The Government supported in full or in principle 13 recommendations of the Advisory Board, with 11 recommendations to be further considered. To date, 15 of the Board's 24 recommendations have been fully or partially acquitted. Of those recommendations that have been fully or partially acquitted, several (including recommendations 7, 9, 12 and 13) are intended to lead to better outcomes for the vulnerable and disadvantaged.</p>
<p>32. That the Victorian Government ensure community housing providers are recognised as public authorities for the purpose of the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Vic).</p>	<p>Under review</p> <p>The Courts and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal have recognised community housing providers as functional public authorities under the Charter. For example, in <i>Goode v Community Equity Housing (Human Rights)</i> [2016] Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal 93, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal clarified that where a community housing provider is exercising the function of providing affordable social or community housing for low-income tenants, and when regulated under the Housing Act as to the exercise of this function, it is a public authority under the Charter.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has funded the Community Housing Industry Association, the peak body for the sector, through the Community Housing Sector Development Fund, to build the capacity of the community housing sector in human rights by focussing on policies and practices, including the development of tools and training to support human rights assessments and best practice. The Service Agreements</p>

	the government has with community housing providers also include a requirement that agencies must act in a manner that is compatible with the Charter.
<p>33. That the Victorian Government amend the <i>Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i> (Vic) to provide the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with jurisdiction to consider whether eviction decisions for tenants in social housing comply with the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Vic).</p>	<p>Under review</p> <p>The <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> (Vic) requires the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to be satisfied, in the circumstances of the particular application, that it is reasonable and proportionate to make a possession order having regard to a number of factors. This reasonable and proportionate test applies to applications commenced by social housing providers and provides the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal with the discretion to consider the context surrounding any eviction matters.</p> <p>The factors that Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal is required to consider in making decisions in eviction matters under the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> relate to protections under the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Vic) (the Charter). In making these decisions, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal already considers the impact on any family unit and the potential for homelessness. Charter submissions can also be considered if raised during a hearing.</p> <p>A specific legislative requirement for the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to consider the Charter in eviction decisions for tenants in social housing may have significant impacts on the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's ability to conduct hearings in compliance with section 98 of the <i>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i> (Vic). The Victorian Government will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the current reasonable and proportionate test that was introduced by the <i>Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018</i> (Vic) before considering any specific legislative reform in this area. Any reform will be considered in consultation with Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>34. That the Victorian Government include the right to housing in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).</p>	<p>Under review</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to protecting and promoting human rights and understands the importance of ensuring safe, secure and affordable housing for all Victorians. The <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Charter) contains twenty rights that promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. While the Charter does not contain a positive right to housing or an adequate standard of living, section 13 of the Charter protects a person's right not to have their home unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. The government is focused on improving the accessibility and enforceability of the Charter before considering the addition of further rights, such as the right to housing.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is ensuring more Victorians have the security and stability of a home with Victoria's biggest investment ever in social housing.</p> <p>In the 2020-21 State Budget, the Victorian Government announced the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build, building thousands of new homes for Victorians in need and delivering greater housing choice and affordability, ensuring thousands of Victorians have the modern, secure and accessible housing they need. The Big Housing Build is the largest single investment in social and affordable housing in our state's history. This investment will deliver 12,000 new social and affordable rental homes, increasing the social housing available to people in need across Victoria and provide access to people in greatest need on the Victorian Housing Register.</p> <p>Any future reform to rights in the Charter will require detailed and thorough consideration of the resourcing and economic impacts on Victorians.</p>

<p>35. That the Victorian Government improve access to specialist family violence crisis accommodation facilities, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting demand modelling for family violence crisis accommodation across the state in order to ascertain need, • providing additional funding for accommodation facilities, including for core and cluster models of accommodation • ensuring regional areas have access to family violence crisis accommodation to allow persons experiencing violence to remain in or close to their communities. 	<p>Support in full</p> <p>A new crisis response model has been developed, focused on providing timely and, where safe, local responses to victim survivors who need crisis accommodation. The model will apply to all Specialist Family Services across Victoria from August 2023. As part of this initiative, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is partnering with Safe Steps, Victoria's central co-ordination point for referrals to refuges, to enhance data capture and reporting to inform demand modelling and commence an independent evaluation of the model.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is also redeveloping 17 communal refuges across the state into core and cluster models and establishing two new Aboriginal core and cluster refuges. To date, 14 redevelopments have been completed across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Construction of the remaining redevelopments is scheduled to be completed during 2024-25. At the end of the program, there will be new facilities in Goulburn, Ovens Murray, Mallee, Outer Gippsland, Inner Gippsland, Wimmera South-West and Barwon.</p> <p>The 2021-22 State Budget also provided a further \$9 million over four years to construct and operate a new Aboriginal specific core-and-cluster refuge in Horsham (Wimmera South West area), taking the number of new Aboriginal core and cluster refuges to three. The 2022-23 State Budget also provided \$69 million over four years to provide two additional family violence core and cluster refuges in areas of high demand, as well as an additional six crisis accommodation properties to help victim survivors, who still need support and accommodation assistance upon leaving a refuge.</p> <p>There will be 35 family violence refuges across Victoria with capacity to support approximately 197 households at any one time once the current refuge redevelopment program and e additional refuges provided through the 2022-23 State Budget are completed.</p>
<p>36. That the Victorian Government Investigate mechanisms to address the use by homelessness services of Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) funding to place persons in inappropriate forms of private accommodation such as unsafe hotels, motels and caravan parks due to the lack of any alternative housing options.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Housing Establishment Fund provides flexible funds to assist homeless people to access overnight accommodation or private rental accommodation. Funds can also be used for other assistance relating to relocation and establishing housing.</p> <p>The Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding (2014) state that the Housing Establishment Fund can be used "to assist people who are homeless to access <i>appropriate and safe</i> overnight or emergency accommodation and related services where no other option is available".</p> <p>Victorian Government is also increasing the Housing Establishment Fund for specialist homelessness services by \$2.5 million in 2023-24. This one-off increase will help support services to meet the increased demand for emergency accommodation and support our most vulnerable people in locations of most need. This will increase the Victorian Government's commitment to the Homelessness Establishment Fund to over \$15 million in 2023-24.</p>

<p>37. That the Victorian Government support homelessness service agencies to broaden the availability of emergency crisis accommodation, therefore limiting the number of people in need of crisis accommodation being put into unsuitable hotels, motels and caravan parks.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government has invested in the largest program based on Housing First principles in Australia, where people are able to avoid crisis accommodation and are instead placed into long term housing. This approach is backed by international evidence based best-practice and leads to positive outcomes and impact for both the individual and the communities within which they live.</p> <p>Following on from record investments in the Housing First-focused From Homeless to a Home, Homes for Families and Journeys to Social Inclusion programs, the 2023-24 State Budget includes investment of \$134 million to provide access to critical housing and homelessness support across the state which increases the availability of accommodation options. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Congregate Crisis Supported Accommodation program which includes on-site delivery of essential health and addiction services at four congregate crisis accommodation facilities, to help treat the underlying complex and diverse causes of people’s homelessness, including alcohol and other drug treatment and mental health and chronic health treatment • continuation of a Housing First response including on-site multidisciplinary support for individuals experiencing rough sleeping across five supportive housing facilities, and intensive multidisciplinary support for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This is in addition to three supportive housing facilities that were already operational. <p>The Victorian Government’s \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build investment will provide more than 12,000 new homes for the future. As a result of this investment, 9,300 new social housing homes will be available to people on the Victorian Housing Register. The investment will support households most in need, such as those experiencing homelessness, people living with mental illness, family violence survivors and people with a disability. This investment also includes delivery of housing through a purchase program designed to ensure there is a supply of dwellings in the broader Big Housing Build that will provide housing support to those households most in need.</p> <p>The significant Big Housing Build investment will be complemented by the Victorian Government’s \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund which will deliver more than 1,300 homes across regional Victoria.</p>
<p>38. That the Victorian Government improve monitoring and compliance actions in relation to rooming houses, and in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure Consumer Affairs Victoria is adequately resourced to monitor and inspect registered rooming houses to ensure the prescribed standards are met and to investigate and respond to reports of unregistered rooming houses • promote information- 	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to improving the regulation of the rooming house sector and is undertaking a review of rooming house regulatory arrangements which is considering ways to improve governance, enforcement, compliance and rooming house minimum standards.</p> <p>The new <i>Residential Tenancies (Rooming House Standards) Regulations 2023</i> were developed following public consultation in early 2023. The regulations commenced on 26 February 2023 and build on existing standards for the safety and amenity of rooming houses and include new minimum standards such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirements for properties to be structurally sound and free of dampness and mould, • dedicated food preparation areas in residents’ rooms or in a common area, • improved security for external windows • window coverings that provide greater privacy in residents’ rooms and other living areas, • provision of washing machines in laundry facilities, • clearer requirements for window coverings in residents’ rooms, including mandatory blind cord safety anchors, • available power outlets in residents’ rooms,

<p>sharing and collaborative responses between Consumer Affairs Victoria and local councils to in order to target unregistered rooming houses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate the potential for development of a standardised accommodation rating system for private rooming houses review planning scheme provisions in relation to rooming houses to prevent a concentration in particular areas and to ensure they have connectivity to services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased clarity about the types of locks needed on bathroom doors, window coverings that provide greater privacy in residents' rooms and other living areas, more fridge space for residents. <p>Consumer Affairs Victoria will continue its risk-based compliance focus on rooming houses. This will involve greater collaboration between Consumer Affairs Victoria, local councils, Victoria Police and other government agencies. The government will investigate whether this could be facilitated through information sharing protocols.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will investigate the benefits of an accommodation rating system for rooming houses. Rooming house residents and their advocates will be given the opportunity for input.</p> <p>Planning permit exemptions apply for domestic scale rooming houses in residential areas, reflecting a long-standing policy position of successive governments based on the need to support the provision of rooming house accommodation. The planning system typically does not regulate the number of any given type of approved land use.</p>
<p>39. That the Victorian Government provide funding for an increase in both general and specialised forms of crisis accommodation, with a focus on provision of appropriate forms of onsite support, including in Melbourne's growth areas and parts of regional Victoria where crisis accommodation is currently lacking.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>As outlined in recommendation 37, the Victorian Government has invested in the largest Housing First program in Australia where people can avoid crisis accommodation and are instead placed into long term housing. This approach is international evidence based best-practice and leads to positive outcomes and impact for both the individual and the communities within which they live.</p> <p>Since 2020, the Victorian Government has invested over \$167 million in the From Homelessness to a Home program and \$66 million in the Homes for Families program supporting a combined total of approximately 1,900 adults and 700 children across regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. These programs will continue in an ongoing manner to support people experiencing recurring homelessness.</p> <p>Following on from this largest investment in the Housing First-focused From Homelessness to a Home and Homes for Families, the 2023-24 State Budget includes investment of \$134 million to provide access to critical housing and homelessness support across the state which increases the availability of accommodation options. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Congregate Crisis Supported Accommodation program which includes on-site delivery of essential health and addiction services at four congregate crisis accommodation facilities, to help treat the underlying complex and diverse causes of people's homelessness, including alcohol and other drug treatment and mental health and chronic health treatment continuation of a Housing First response including on-site multidisciplinary support for individuals experiencing rough sleeping across five supportive housing facilities, and intensive multidisciplinary support for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This is in addition to another three supportive housing facilities that were already operational and also moves people straight into a long-term home. <p>Victorian Government is also increasing the Housing Establishment Fund for specialist homelessness services by \$2.5 million in 2023-24. This one-off increase will help support services to meet the increased demand for emergency accommodation and support our most vulnerable</p>

	<p>people in locations of most need. This will increase the Victorian Government’s commitment to the Homelessness Establishment Fund to over \$15 million in 2023-24.</p> <p>The Victorian Government’s \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build investment will provide more than 12,000 new homes for the future. As a result of this investment, 9,300 new social housing homes will be available to people on the Victorian Housing Register. The investment will support households most in need, such as those experiencing homelessness, people living with mental illness, family violence survivors and people with a disability. This investment also includes delivery of housing through a purchase program designed to ensure there is a supply of dwellings in the broader Big Housing Build that will provide housing support to those households most in need.</p> <p>The Big Housing Build will invest 25 per cent of the \$5.3 billion program across regional Victoria, with a \$1.25 billion investment in regional homes. The significant Big Housing Build investment will be complemented by the Victorian Government \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund to deliver more than 1,300 homes across regional Victoria.</p> <p>Additionally, the Victorian Government’s Building Works package included more than \$498 million for the upgrade and maintenance of social housing, and the creation of new social and crisis housing options. Of this package, \$115 million was invested in Rapid Housing initiatives that included the renovation or repurposing of existing dwellings to create new housing options.</p>
<p>40. That the Victorian Government ensure that those who transition from emergency accommodation under the <i>From Homelessness to a Home</i> program are transferred to stable, secure, long-term housing, rather than crisis accommodation.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government has invested in a range of accommodation options, so people are offered assistance that is tailored to their individual needs and provided with a pathway to stable housing and a longer-term solution to resolve their homelessness. Programs based on the Housing First principles are a key feature in Victoria’s long-term strategic approach to homelessness, including the From Homelessness to a Home program.</p> <p>The 2023-24 State Budget includes a \$67.6 million investment to continue delivering a Housing First response for people experiencing chronic homelessness including new and existing clients in the From Homelessness to a Home program. The From Homelessness to a Home program is funded ongoingly to ensure people with the greatest needs can continue to receive ongoing tailored support.</p> <p>This will also include on-site multidisciplinary support for individuals experiencing rough sleeping across five supportive housing facilities, and intensive multidisciplinary support for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This investment is in addition to another three supportive housing facilities were already operational.</p>
<p>41. That the Victorian Government provide funding to homelessness services operating within the <i>From Homelessness to a Home</i> program so that they can continue to support clients for an extended period after they have been placed in long-term housing, with a view to assisting participants to maintain their housing.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Further to information provided in response to recommendation 40, the From Homelessness to a Home program is funded ongoingly to ensure people with the greatest needs can continue to receive ongoing tailored support.</p>

<p>42. That the Victorian Government investigate options for the prioritisation of the housing portfolio in processes for the sale of surplus government land.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>Beyond the Big Housing Build and related affordable and social housing investments, the Victorian Government is making more surplus and underutilised government land available for housing, including social and affordable housing.</p> <p>Victoria's Housing Statement, released in September 2023, identified new initiatives to unlock and rezone surplus government land across both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. A target of at least 10 per cent affordable homes will be built across these sites.</p> <p>An additional \$1 billion will be made available through Affordable Housing Investment Partnerships (AHIP), providing low interest loans and government guarantees to finance social and affordable housing.</p> <p>New funding, supported by a pipeline of surplus government land will open development partnership opportunities between institutional investors and private and community sectors, growing provision of social housing and taking pressure off the existing system with more affordable housing options available for people on low and moderate incomes.</p> <p>Homes Victoria will continue to work with the Land Coordinator General and the Precinct and Land functions in the Department of Transport and Planning, to identify and deliver a future pipeline of development ready sites for social and affordable housing.</p>
<p>43. That the Victorian Government engage with relevant stakeholder groups to assess how pop-up housing proposals could contribute to transitional housing options in Victoria. In conducting such an assessment, the Victorian Government should consider whether these proposals meet appropriate governance standards and the appropriateness of offering support in the form of temporary land tax concessions for organisations participating in the scheme.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan recognises that the successful resolution of rough sleeping must begin with housing and increasing access to suitable, affordable, permanent housing for people sleeping rough or who are at risk of chronic homelessness and rough sleeping.</p> <p>Recent reforms to the Victorian planning system to streamline assessment for housing delivered on or behalf of Homes Victoria will enable faster approval of more social housing that can potentially benefit households exiting homeless services into more secure accommodation. This includes assessment of a variety of housing proposals in partnership with the private sector and community housing organisations to deliver new social housing.</p> <p>The Victorian Government funded Village 21 Preston is a partnership between Kids Under Cover, Anglicare and the City of Darebin that leverages available land and locates 5-6 portable studio apartments together providing young people with a stable home, wrap around supports and communal living elements for up to three years. The Victorian Government has committed to further Village 21 projects at Mooroopna and Bairnsdale through the \$50 million Youth Capital Grants, which form part of the Big Housing Build.</p> <p>Since July 2021, Homes Victoria has commissioned over 3,300 social homes under the Social Housing Growth Fund from the community housing sector, supported by government investment of over \$1 billion in upfront capital grant funding. creating over 13,000 jobs across metropolitan and regional Victoria.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is also partnering closely with the community housing sector through the Building Financial Capacity of Housing Agencies initiative to make available a further \$1 billion in low interest loans and government guarantees to increase the supply of social housing across Victoria. This builds on the existing \$1.1 billion available to select community housing agencies to develop more social housing under the Building Financial Capacity of Housing Agencies initiative.</p> <p>Additionally, the Victorian Government's Building Works investment included more than \$498 million for the upgrade and maintenance of social housing, and the creation of new social and crisis housing options. Of this package, \$115 million was invested in Rapid Housing initiatives that included the renovation or repurposing of existing dwellings to create new housing options.</p>

<p>44. That the Victorian Government ensure there is long-term housing stock available from Victoria's Big Housing Build for participants of Housing First programs operating in metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Big Housing Build and future programs, such as the \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund, are being designed to ensure the housing portfolio meets the needs of current and future tenants. The Big Housing Build will deliver 9,300 new social housing dwellings which will be a ten percent increase to the total number of social housing dwellings in Victoria. There are a number of key cohort targets in the Big Housing Build delivery, including: 25 per cent of investment allocated to regional and rural areas; 10 percent of all net social dwellings are to support First Peoples housing needs; 1,000 homes for victim survivors of family violence; and 2,000 dwellings for people with mental illness, which will be delivered as supported accommodation places under reforms emerging from the Mental Health Royal Commission. Under existing policy settings through the Victorian Housing Register, people in Housing First programs meet the criteria for a number of priority access categories and priority reasons. This process will provide a pathway to existing social housing and the Big Housing Build includes 680 homes for From Homelessness to a Home /Homes for Families renters exiting head leased dwellings and 130 homes for Journey to Social Inclusion renters.</p> <p>The Mental Health Royal Commission has set specific allocation parameters for the 2,000 mental health supported housing places, including that these places are allocated to people who require intensive ongoing treatment and support (specifically for long-stay people in an acute inpatient setting who are unable to be discharged due to a lack of appropriate discharge options), and are experiencing long-term homelessness or are at high risk of becoming chronically homeless. The supported housing model for these 2,000 dwellings includes integrated, multi-disciplinary and individually tailored mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support, which aligns strongly with a Housing First approach.</p> <p>Additionally, the community led <i>Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort</i> - Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home - The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework provides a 20-year agenda putting in place the building blocks of new approaches to achieve safe and secure housing for Victoria's First Peoples with Housing First a key principle.</p>
<p>45. That the Victorian Government expand Housing First programs throughout metropolitan regional and rural areas to include further cohorts of people experiencing homelessness, in addition to rough sleepers.</p>	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to providing people experiencing homelessness with tailored responses that assist them to access and maintain stable housing. Programs based on the Housing First principles are a key feature in Victoria's long-term strategic approach to homelessness.</p> <p>Since 2020, the Victorian Government has invested over \$167 million in the From Homelessness to a Home program and \$66 million in the Homes for Families program supporting a combined total of approximately 1,900 adults and 700 children across regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. This is the largest Housing First program in Australia and means people can avoid crisis accommodation by being placed into long term housing. This approach is international evidence based best-practice and leads to positive outcomes and impact for both the individual and the communities within which they live.</p> <p>These programs are now an ongoing part of the homelessness response and will support people experiencing recurring homelessness. Victoria's investment in Housing First initiatives also continues to grow. The 2022-23 and 2023-24 State Budget included funding for five permanent supportive housing facilities providing multidisciplinary support for individuals experiencing rough sleeping and intensive multidisciplinary support for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This includes funding to construct two new facilities in regional Victoria and adds to the three supportive housing facilities that were already operational.</p> <p>Funding has also provided to deliver a Housing First approach for around 225 young people with complex needs who are exiting residential care and other settings. Through the initiative, which is modelled on the successful COMPASS Partnerships Addressing Disadvantage program, young people will be supported towards independence through three years of multidisciplinary support and access to housing</p> <p>The Victorian Government's significant investment in the statewide From Homelessness to a Home and Homes for Families programs, followed on from investment in the smaller Journey to Social Inclusion Program. Journey to Social Inclusion is continuing to deliver results</p>

	<p>through its approach to supporting people who have experienced chronic homelessness to make a home and improve their health and wellbeing. The program has shown it prevents engagement with high-cost homelessness and emergency department services.</p> <p>Aboriginal-specific multidisciplinary Housing First teams will also be established alongside the Aboriginal homelessness entry point pilot, to provide an additional layer of support at outreach and entry to the homelessness system, in addition to intensive support for Victoria's First Peoples with multiple and complex needs.</p> <p>Through the Big Housing Build and recent State Budgets, the Victorian Government has been able to introduce more Housing First initiatives. The \$1 billion investment in the Regional Housing Fund and investments by the Commonwealth to grow social housing will support this continued focus on Housing First, in line with international best practice.</p>
46. That the Victorian Government, in alignment with its own findings, ensure that social housing dwellings are reflective of the current and projected needs of applicants on the Victorian Housing Register, including by ensuring an adequate proportion of dwellings are 1- and 2-bedroom properties.	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build and future programs are being designed to ensure the housing portfolio meets the needs of current and future tenants and creates vibrant mixed communities. This includes higher proportions of one and two-bedroom homes, noting that some larger family homes are still needed where waiting times are very high for 3 and 4+ bedroom homes.</p>
47. That the Victorian Government Advocate to the Commonwealth Government to permanently increase the rate of Jobseeker payments. The Victorian Government should further advocate for reconsideration of the indexation of this payment to CPI and to also urgently consider the many barriers to income support accessibility.	<p>Support in full</p> <p>The Victorian Government continues to advocate to the Commonwealth Government for increased income support measures and for increased accessibility to income support for people experiencing homelessness. Victoria welcomes measures in the Commonwealth's 23-24 Budget, including an increase to JobSeeker payments, the establishment of a program to support access to primary care services for people experiencing homelessness, and funding to continue homelessness services through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. However, further enhancements to income support measures, such as JobSeeker, are needed to ensure that they are accessible and sufficient to support people to access and maintain housing.</p>
48. That the Victorian Government provide additional funding to	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the barriers faced by people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in accessing and retaining accommodation in the private rental market.</p>

<p>homelessness services to commission and expand head leasing programs to ensure people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, in appropriate circumstances, can be assisted into private residential tenancies and given support to maintain them.</p>	<p>The Private Rental Assistance Program has provided people with assistance to access and maintain housing in the private rental market. This includes the introduction of the Private Rental Assistance Program Plus, as an additional tailored and flexible service to support households needing financial assistance to stabilise their situation in the private rental market. The Victorian Government will continue to work with Private Rental Assistance Program providers to improve pathways to assist them to gain access to the private rental market.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program was co-designed with Victorian Aboriginal Homelessness and Community Housing Organisations to address issues faced by First Peoples that can impact on their access to private rental properties and ability to maintain a tenancy. The Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program will support close to 1,000 First Peoples households over two years to maintain existing tenancies or establish new tenancies in the private rental market.</p> <p>Following a recommendation of <i>Mana-na Woorn-tyeen Maar-takoort - Every Aboriginal Person has a Home: The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework</i>, the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies delivered the Aboriginal Private Rental Access Project report and recommendations. The recommendations were endorsed by the Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group Koori Caucus and a joint government and Aboriginal community working group has been established to implement the recommendations.</p>
<p>49. That the Victorian Government work with the Real Estate Institute of Victoria and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to develop and roll out mandatory education to real estate agents regarding their obligations to ensure that people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness are afforded equal opportunity to access private rental tenancies. This should address intersectional discrimination towards persons on the basis of various attributes including race, age, prior criminal convictions or lack of rental history.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government is committed to the appropriate regulation of the real estate industry. In October 2020, the Victorian Government increased the qualification requirements for estate agents and agents' representatives following a review of the <i>Estate Agents (Education) Regulations 2018</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Estate Agents (Education) Regulations 2020</i> aim to reduce risks to vulnerable tenants, deliver improvements to the industry and decrease disputes between people and agents.</p> <p>The increased training requirements are intended to improve the competency and quality of new entrants to the real estate industry and require that estate agents undertake units on 'Manage tenant relationships', 'Manage tenancy', 'End tenancy', and 'Access and interpret ethical practice in real estate' which addresses ethical practice.</p> <p>In Victoria's Housing Statement, the Victorian Government committed to the introduction of mandatory continuing professional development for real estate industry professionals, including estate agents and property managers.</p> <p>Any necessary amendments to the <i>Estate Agents Act 1980</i> may require consultation and a Legislative Impact Assessment. Similarly, any amendments to the regulations made under that Act are likely to require a regulatory impact statement and broad consultation to fully consider the costs and benefits of mandatory continuing professional education.</p> <p>The Victorian Government considers that it would not be appropriate to specifically mandate further education around homelessness for all estate agents, given the diverse business models within the industry. Many agents do not manage residential tenancies, for instance estate agents who specialise in commercial property sales, business broking, and rural property agents who specialise in farm sales.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will work with the Real Estate Institute of Victoria and the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to explore opportunities for continuing professional education to support agents to engage with people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, as part of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria compulsory continuing professional education program for its members.</p> <p>The Private Rental Assistance Program provides people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness with financial and practical assistance to establish and maintain tenancies. At a program level, through the Private Rental Assistance Program (including the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program), private rental brokers are employed who have a sound knowledge of, and strong relationships with, the local real estate market to leverage opportunities for vulnerable households and have proven capacity in helping to assist people to access and sustain private</p>

	<p>rental tenancies. Enhanced relationships between agents and brokers will assist in addressing intersectional discrimination towards their clients.</p> <p>The reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act which commenced operation on 29 March 2021 included a range of amendments that addressed discrimination within the scope of the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2021</i>. Consumer Affairs Victoria is promoting compliance with new requirements that provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental providers must not refuse to let premises on the basis of an attribute protected under section 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. • Rental providers must not withhold consent from a request to approve sub-letting on the basis of an attribute protected under section 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. • Rental providers must not issue a notice to vacate if the giving of the notice would constitute direct discrimination within the meaning of the Equal Opportunity Act. • Rental providers must not unreasonably refuse disability-related modifications within the meaning of section 55 of the Equal Opportunity Act. • Renters do not have to provide private information protected by the Equal Opportunity Act when applying for a rental property. This includes information about their disability, ethnicity or gender identity. • Rental agreement forms must include an information statement that educates applicants, rental providers and agents about unlawful discrimination.
<p>50. That the Victorian Government investigate implementing a mandatory inclusionary zoning mechanism that would require a portion of any new major housing development be allocated to social or affordable housing. In designing such a model, the Government should consider making specific incentives available to developers to ameliorate the costs involved and ensure that the cost of dwellings in the development are not increased as a result of the requirement.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Victorian Government has announced an expanded Development Facilitation Program, which will streamline the planning process for medium to high density residential developments that meet the set criteria: construction costs worth at least \$50 million in Melbourne or \$15 million in regional Victoria and delivering at least 10 per cent affordable housing.</p> <p>There will also be clear planning controls to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around an initial ten activity centres across Melbourne by the end of 2024, with the Minister for Planning taking over the planning work from councils in these areas. This program will also consider the best way to incentivise more affordable housing.</p> <p>The Victorian Government, through Homes Victoria, continues to work with councils and other stakeholders to maximise social and affordable housing outcomes by strengthening policy settings; empowering local governments; and showcasing successful projects.</p>

<p>51. That the Victorian Government further investigate the use of the Permanent Rental Affordability Development Solution to ascertain whether it is a practical and appropriate mechanism for increasing provision of affordable housing in Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>On 1 April 2022 the Victorian Government announced a new Australian-first rental scheme that will make at least 2,400 homes available to low to moderate income earners across the state. The Affordable Housing Rental Scheme delivered as part of the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build has commenced, with the scheme offering eligible income earners an affordable rental property for at least three years.</p> <p>From January 2023, renters have progressively moved into the first affordable homes. As at October 2023, there are 201 affordable homes across four sites: Kensington, Ascot Vale, Ashburton and Blackburn.</p> <p>Homes Victoria is investigating the use of the Affordable Housing Register and Permanent Rental Affordability Development Solution model initiatives of the advisory and action group, Housing All Australians. The objectives of the Affordable Housing Rental Scheme align with the Private Rental Affordability Development Solution model and potential collaboration will be explored further.</p> <p>The Development Facilitation Program, expanded as part of Victoria’s Housing Statement, will streamline the planning process for medium to high density residential developments (that meet the set criteria) and deliver additional affordable housing.</p>
--	---