



Juno Submission to the National Housing and Homelessness Bill 2024 (No. 2)

Thank you to Senator David Pocock and Kylea Tink MP for the introduction of the National Housing and Homelessness 2024 (No. 2). Juno supports this bill in full and appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission.

About Juno

Juno is a support and advocacy organisation working across Melbourne's North. We provide gender-informed services that empower and support women (trans and cis), non-binary people and their children experiencing or recovering from the impacts of homelessness and housing stress, family violence and financial insecurity.

Support for the Bill

Juno strongly supports the need for this Bill to provide accountability to all levels of government in addressing Australia's growing housing and homelessness crisis.

The Road Home in 2008 was Australia's last national homelessness strategy and despite going through an extensive submission process to develop a new National Plan in the past year, we are yet to see this realised.

This has led to the current housing and homelessness crisis in which 30,660 Victorians are homeless, a situation that is only getting worse and straining the already strained resources of the housing and homelessness sectors.

The National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024 (No. 2) has the critical components to end homelessness including:

- The commitment to a regular National Plan and Reporting Framework
- The recognition of housing and a human right
- Building constituencies for systemic reform
- Enabling legislation.

Specifically, we support:

Human rights focus

The Bill recognises human rights as the basis for discussions with various housing policy stakeholders and as a guide for developing coordinated policies. Recognising housing as a human right in Federal legislation would start the process of much-needed change, providing the enablers for ending homelessness in Australia. The shift of mindset from housing as a commodity to housing as a right is fundamentally needed if we are to truly address the inadequacies and inequality of Australia's housing system.

Obligations on the Housing Minister

The requirement that the Housing Minister will have to develop a 10-year plan and provide progress reports every 3 years set an accountability that housing and homelessness reform needs to be an ongoing, national commitment.

Designated Agency

The establishment of a designated agency to evaluate the Plan will ensure that future Governments maintain their commitment to a National Housing and Homelessness Plan and builds further accountability and durability of housing and homelessness reform well beyond the electoral cycle. It is critical that this agency is non-political, independent and includes key housing and homelessness agencies as well as people with lived experience of homelessness.

Establish a National Housing Consumer Council

The inclusion of a Consumer Council advising the Housing Minister on the effectiveness of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan will lead to a more grounded and responsive system that meets the needs of those experiencing homelessness or in housing insecurity. Again, these appointments must be independent and non-political, to ensure genuine representation of key, critical stakeholders that can endure across different political cycles and governments.

Gender and homelessness

Juno advocates additionally for a gendered analysis of housing and homelessness policy. Key, gendered data demonstrates that:

- Women accounted for 81.7% of the increase of people experiencing homelessness in the 2021 Census.¹

¹ Census 2021

- The number of homeless women in Australia rose from 49,017 in 2016 to 53,974 in 2021, which represents a 10% increase (compared to the 2% increase in the number of homeless men).²
- 58% of clients seeking support from Specialist Homelessness services (SHS) in Victoria in 2022-2023 were female.³
- Among them, 40% of clients seeking support from Specialist Homelessness services in Victoria in 2022-2023 cited family and domestic violence as their primary reason for seeking assistance.⁴
- Among those experiencing persistent homelessness, women and children affected by family and domestic violence are particularly evident.⁵
- 62% of SHS clients in 2022–23 who experienced family and domestic violence had previously sought assistance from an SHS agency– demonstrating a pattern of persistent homelessness.⁶
- In 2022-23, women accounted for 65% of unassisted requests to SHS and 87% of unassisted requests made by single adults with children were from women.⁷
- 63% of clients with a current mental health issue presenting to SHS services in 2022-23 were women.⁸
- Housing unaffordability, particularly rental unaffordability, is having a disproportionate impact on women, driving more women to seek support from homelessness services. In Victoria, 58% of people seeking assistance from homelessness services are women and among those employed seeking assistance, 70% are women.⁹

² Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (2024), What are the real costs of Australia’s housing crisis for women?, AHURI website, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/analysis/brief/what-are-real-costs-australias-housing-crisis-women>, accessed 15 March 2024.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023.

⁵ Full note: The number of people experiencing persistent homelessness (more than 7 out of 24-months homeless while a client of an SHS agency) increased between 2018-2023, from 29,500 clients in 2018–19 to 36,600 in 2022–23. Increases were particularly evident among *clients aged under 25, women and children affected by family and domestic violence, and Indigenous people*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023. (Italics author’s own)

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 19 December 2023.

⁹ Council to Homeless Persons (2024), Employed and At Risk: The new face of homelessness in Victoria, CHP Website, accessed 29 April 2024.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in support of this bill. Juno believes the Bill has the components to support the sustained and effective housing and homelessness policy needed to address the growing rates of homelessness and housing insecurity in Australia, and we look forward to continuing working with all levels of government to see an end to homelessness.

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