



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROJECT REPORT

July 2023

CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing (CWSW) is the leading voice for women and children affected by gender-based violence in Western Australia. CWSW is an independent organisation and the peak representative body for women's specialist domestic and family violence, community-based women's health, and sexual assault services in Western Australia. CWSW works with governments, peak bodies, community, and private organisations to prevent violence against women, promote women's health, advance gender equity, and to ensure that women's voices are integral to policy, legislation, and services. CWSW takes an intersectional approach that recognises the multiple forms of discrimination many women face, so that responses to these issues address the particular and diverse needs of women.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing acknowledges we are located on stolen Whadjuk Noongar land. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and call for reparations to be made as part of our reconciliation journey. We honour Aboriginal people for their continued resistance and resilience, and we pay deep respect to elders of all generations who continue to protect and promote culture and country.

Recognition of victims and survivors

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing recognises the strength and resilience of adults, children, and young people who have experienced domestic, family, and sexual violence and acknowledge that it is essential that responses to domestic, family, and sexual violence are informed by their expert knowledge and advocacy.

We pay respects to those who did not survive and acknowledge friends and family members who have lost loved ones to the preventable and far-reaching issue.

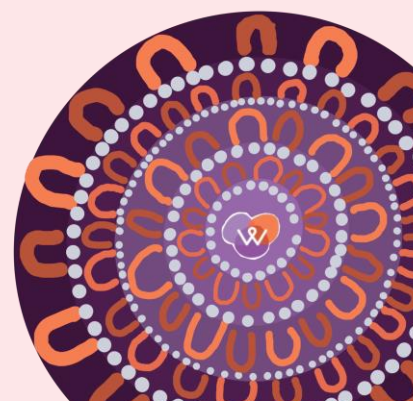
Thank you

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing acknowledges the support of the Minderoo Foundation in funding this research project.

Thanks are extended to all those that participated in interviews, surveys and discussion groups. Special thanks to the members of the Advisory Committee who gave so generously of their time and expertise; and to Christina Kadmos from Kalico Consulting for project research and preparing this report.

Artist: Rosie Paine

Rosie Paine is a proud Yilka/Wongutha/Noongar/Yamatji woman from the North East Goldfields of Western Australia.



Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Recommendations.....	5
Introduction.....	7
What is transitional housing?.....	8
Policy context.....	10
Types of transitional housing programs.....	12
Different models across Australia.....	12
Transitional housing in Western Australia.....	15
How many transitional housing properties are there in WA?.....	15
Eligibility.....	15
Tenancy and property management.....	16
Tenancy support.....	17
Support services.....	17
Challenges.....	18
Demand for transitional housing.....	18
Experiences of women living in transitional housing.....	20
Cost of providing transitional housing and support.....	22
Property and tenancy costs.....	22
Support costs.....	23
Outcomes of transitional housing.....	24
Housing pathways as a critical variable to outcomes.....	27
A service model for supported transitional housing.....	29
Types of support needed.....	31
Intersectionality.....	32
Appendix 1: Research methods.....	34
Appendix 2: Jurisdictional scan of transitional housing models.....	36
Appendix 3: Program logic of transitional housing and support in WA.....	42



Executive Summary

Crisis accommodation provided by refuges is intended as a high security, high support service. However, not all women are ready to immediately move from short-term crisis accommodation to long-term, independent living and lower levels of support within a three-month period. Supported transitional housing is an important and effective option for such women.

Evidence shows that programs which provide both housing and support can have significant benefits in reducing the risk of homelessness and assisting women and children to heal, stabilise and reestablish their lives. The place of supported transitional housing in a system response to victim-survivors is recognised in the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

In Western Australia, supported transitional housing is a well-established but small and highly under-funded part of the domestic and family violence refuge model. Supported transitional housing programs being offered by refuges have developed organically - in the absence of any overarching government strategy or investment commitment.

Supported transitional housing is an extension of the refuge support model that includes ongoing risk assessment and safety planning; case planning and coordination with a focus on wraparound and integrated support; housing and tenancy support; and active referral pathways and advocacy.

With only 80 or so transitional housing properties within the refuge sector, and potentially one in two women being eligible and suitable for transitional housing, supply can clearly not meet demand.

Further work is needed to quantify the potential demand, service provision and exit pathways for supported transitional housing for women and children exiting refuges in Western Australia. Currently, published SHS does not provide reports for Western Australia refuges only and does not differentiate between crisis accommodation and transitional housing clients.

Expansion of transitional housing stock is desperately needed. There are different ways in which this could occur e.g. sourced from social housing or private market, refuge or third managed properties, regionally shared properties. The critical element is that the housing is appropriate, accessible to refuges as an exit pathway, that refuges have nomination rights, and that a refuge is the support provider.



The full, direct costs of transitional housing includes:

- property costs, including security
- tenancy management
- supportive landlord contingencies
- support coordination and case management for women and children
- access to flexible payment funds for women and children.

Incorporating all property, tenancy and support costs, current supported transitional housing programs are underfunded. Rental income does not cover full costs. However, apart from rents, there is no revenue stream for supported transitional housing programs. Rents do not cover any costs for support coordination and case management; and depending on a range of variables, may not cover full property and tenancy costs.

All women exiting crisis accommodation and transitional housing require access to ongoing support and a long-term home. Transitional housing cannot compensate for the absence of affordable, suitable housing; and without effective housing exit pathways, transitional housing programs become bottlenecked.

A significant policy and investment strategy is needed to build upon the current transitional housing models and achieve the National Plan's action to: 'enhance linkages between emergency accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing to support the housing needs of victim-survivors through the continuum of housing needs through to the recovery stage'.



Recommendations

1. State Government immediate investment for existing domestic and family violence Supported Transitional Housing.
2. Further investment to coordinate a leading practice model for the delivery of domestic and family violence Supported Transitional Housing.
3. Further investment to coordinate identifying and mapping of supported transitional housing need across WA.
4. Ongoing and increased investment into specialist domestic and family violence outreach support, including mobile outreach to support women and children in transitional housing and other accommodation.
5. Develop, pilot and evaluate service models tailored to the two year post-separation period (which we know is not linear or predictable) that supports victim survivor safety, recovery and reestablishment, wherever they are residing.
6. Increase investment into Safe at Home and pathways that provide women and children with affordable, appropriate and secure housing, including social housing, rapid rehousing and rental assistance programs.



Introduction

On 12 September 2023, domestic and family violence and community service representatives met with the Hon. Simone McGurk MLA, Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services and the Hon. John Carey MLA, Minister for Housing; Lands; Homelessness; Local Government to discuss the critical issue of housing for women and children seeking to leave a perpetrator of domestic and family violence.

A key recommendation to emerge from the roundtable discussion was to develop a transitional housing service model tailored to victim-survivors for the two years post-separation from the perpetrator of domestic and family violence. Post-separation reestablishment is a complex, multi-faceted process that requires differential social, legal and housing systems responses to support the safety and well-being of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

In 2022, the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing (CWSW) received funding from the Minderoo Foundation to develop a proposal for a transitional housing service model that includes practical and therapeutical supports for women and children victim-survivors for up to two years post-separation from the perpetrator of domestic and family violence.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Review the national and international evidence on the effectiveness and experiences of transitional housing interventions and supports/services for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.
- Review effective transitional housing and support models from other disciplinary areas for any key learnings.
- Consult with stakeholders from the domestic and family violence and housing sectors across Western Australia.
- Consult with the family and domestic violence sectors from other states and territories.
- Consult with women with lived experience of domestic and family violence.

An Advisory Committee guided the project. Research methods are outlined in Appendix 1.

This report summarises project findings and recommendations for expanding transitional housing and support models in Western Australia.



What is transitional housing?

Crisis accommodation services (refuges) for women and children escaping domestic and family violence offer immediate safety and intensive support. Crisis accommodation is intended to be short-term (up to three or so months), with exits to longer-term housing and post-crisis support. However, a lack of viable housing and support pathways after refuge accommodation is resulting in women and their children remaining in refuges for up to six months or more. This is due to a lack of social housing; limited affordable and accessible private rental housing; complex support needs; and the limited incomes of many women leaving abusive partners.

Additionally, not all women are immediately ready to move from a refuge to independent housing and lower levels of support within a three-month period. There may be continuing concerns around safety; and the complex impact of violence can mean that women are still in need of higher levels of support to stabilise themselves and their children, as they move towards independence and reestablishment.

For women who are ready to leave crisis accommodation but still require a high continuity of support and secure housing, transitional housing programs can provide a much needed bridge.

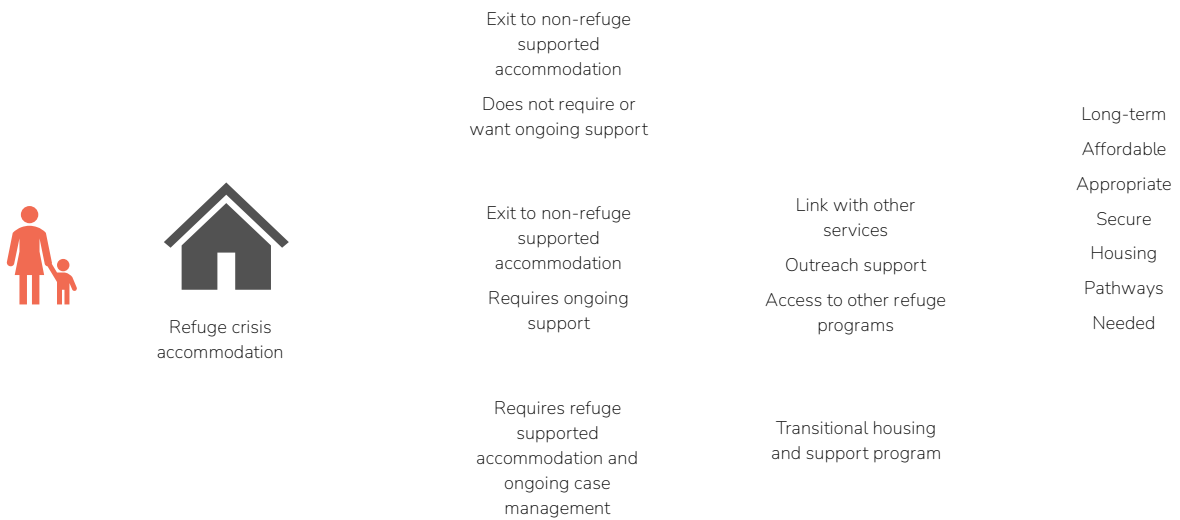
Transitional housing programs provide victim-survivors with short to medium term housing and support services as a pathway towards independent living. Women are given continued support in safe, affordable accommodation and the time and services they need to achieve goals for long-term independence, safety and stability.

Without transitional housing programs, many victim-survivors may have no other option than to remain in refuges for longer than is desirable (thus placing a strain on meeting demand for crisis accommodation), return to their abusive partner or face homelessness.

As identified in sector consultations for this project, whilst transitional housing models are a combination of support and housing for a specific cohort of women exiting refuges, the majority of women and children moving on from crisis accommodation require some level of ongoing support and assistance to stabilise and reestablish their lives (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Pathways after crisis accommodation



Whilst the focus of this project is on transitional housing and support programs, Advisory Committee members are acutely aware that:

- not all women and children exiting a refuge have equal access to transitional housing options
- transitional housing is not an option that is suitable for all women and children
- all women and children escaping domestic and family violence should have access to a wraparound model of support for the first two years post-separation
- all women and children exiting crisis accommodation need long-term housing pathways.

Policy context

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*¹ (the National Plan) recognises that 'safe, affordable, and accessible housing is key to ending violence against women and children' (p.58).

Transitional housing is linked to the following domains of the National Plan:

- Response objectives: "Ensure women and children escaping violence have safe and secure housing, from crisis accommodation to longer-term, sustainable social housing."
- Recovery and healing objectives: "Ensure victim-survivors are well supported in all aspects of their daily lives through trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible services that support long-term recovery."

Identified actions in the National Plan (p. 117) that link directly to transitional housing programs and exit pathways from transitional housing include:

- Provide additional crisis and transitional housing options for women and children.
- Enhance linkages between emergency accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing to support the housing needs of victim-survivors through the continuum of housing needs through to the recovery stage.
- Support victim-survivors to find safe housing options in the private market where they are able to do so.
- Recognise the particular housing challenges faced by women and children with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, migrant and refugee women, women in remote and regional communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Ensure housing and infrastructure plans respond to these challenges by including the voices of people with lived experience from the early design phase to completion.

A shortage of transitional and long-term social and affordable housing means some women and children exiting crisis accommodation are faced with a choice of returning to a violent home or becoming homeless.

National Plan

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Social Services. (2022) National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032. <https://www.dss.gov.au/women-programs-services-reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032>.

- Build more social and affordable housing for women and children, including more social housing properties.



Types of transitional housing programs

In Australia, historically domestic and family violence transitional housing arose as an extension of the women's refuge model. Refuges acquired properties (often by entering into lease arrangements with public housing authorities) that were then sub-leased as transitional housing; and support was provided as part of a refuge's outreach program. In this way, refuges broadened their umbrella of support to women - women continued to be a client of the refuge and had access to case management, housing support, advocacy, refuge run programs and referrals to address holistic needs and concerns as women moved along their journey towards recovery, independence and reestablishment. Transitional housing as an extension of the refuge model is also common to other countries.^{2 3}

Over time, some refuges chose to separate the 'landlord' and 'support' elements of transitional housing by entering into agreements with community housing organisations (CHOs) or private real estate agents to provide property and tenancy management services. Other refuges continued to manage their own properties. The proportion of refuges across Australia that have transitional housing properties is not known.

Different models across Australia

Over recent years, different states have developed system-wide transitional housing programs, either as part of their homelessness or family violence strategies or both (Appendix 2). These programs operate in addition to traditional refuge models and often apply to a broader homeless cohort than victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

Across jurisdictions, where there has been an increase in public housing stock being used for transitional housing, leases and property management have largely been invested in registered CHOs. In examples such as the Queensland Community Rent Scheme and Tasmania Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Scheme, provision is made for CHOs to rent from the private market.

System-wide programs may or may not have a domestic and family violence focus. For example, in Victoria, domestic and family violence victim-survivors apply for the same transitional housing as other cohorts, through a common entry point, and

² Lako, D.A.M., Beijersbergen, M.D., Jonker, I.E. et al. The effectiveness of critical time intervention for abused women leaving women's shelters: a randomized controlled trial. *Int J Public Health* 63, 513–523 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-017-1067-1>

³ Baker, C.K., Holditch Niolon, P., and Oliphant, H., (2009), A Descriptive Analysis of Transitional Housing Programs for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in the United States, *Violence Against Women* 2009 15:4, 460-481.



support is provided by designated housing support managers. In South Australia, a specific number of transitional housing properties have been quarantined for domestic and family violence and application and allocation is done through a Domestic and Family Violence Safety Alliance (statewide).

Rapid rehousing programs exist in Queensland, NSW, Tasmania and Victoria, although the models differ.⁴ In Queensland and Tasmania it is CHOs that lease the private properties and then sub-lease to tenants. In NSW, the Start Safely program subsidises successful applicants directly. In Victoria both models are in place.

None of the system-level transitional housing models reviewed appear to provide direct funding to refugees to support women and children exiting a refuge into transitional housing.⁵ Where case management services are funded, it is largely through housing support agencies, although these services may have a domestic and family violence focus, as is the case in Tasmania. Interviews with Tasmania, Queensland and Victorian domestic and family violence services indicate that outreach support (including to transitional housing clients) is regarded as part of core refuge funding.

Transitional housing programs generally offer housing and support for one to two years. The NSW Rent Choice Start Safely scheme provides subsidised rent in the private rental market for up to three years (rents gradually go up after the first year) and the Victorian Transitional Housing Plus program allows for renewed six-month leases up to five years.

Transitional housing is for a medium term duration, with the expectation that the tenant exits the program to other longer-term accommodation. Interviews conducted with inter-state services as part of this project all spoke of the critical issue of a lack of long-term housing pathways for women and children in transitional housing. The housing crisis being experienced across Australia means that whilst transitional housing is intended to reduce the bottleneck experienced by crisis accommodation providers, a lack of housing pathways has meant that the transitional housing system itself is bottlenecked, with people staying in transitional housing long after expected timeframes.

⁴ Two rapid rehousing pilots have recently been funded in Western Australia.

⁵ It was unclear how the dedicated support trial works in NSW and the Department was unable to provide detailed information.



Staying in the same home

Drawing on the housing first concept that housing should be for the duration of need, and acknowledging that for many women there is a lack of post-transitional housing options, there are emerging models that allow a transitional housing tenant to remain in the same home whilst exiting as a transitional housing client.

An example of this model occurs in Queensland under the Same House Different Landlord scheme, whereby public housing properties are leased to CHOs to provide transitional housing. At the end of the transitional housing period, the tenancy and the property are transferred back to the public authority and the tenant has the choice to become a public housing tenant. Tasmania's Rapid Rehousing program tries to incorporate a similar option in their private rental scheme. Foundation Housing and Housing Choices in Western Australia (both interviewed for this project) provided examples in mental health independent living programs where the property can be unlocked from the support at program exit to provide continuous housing for the tenant.

A domestic violence transitional housing model that provides women with the option to stay in their home beyond the duration of support has the potential to deliver improved outcomes for women and children. It reduces the disruption caused by yet another housing change, provides stability at the critical time when support services may be reducing, and reduces the anxiety a women often feels in transitional housing, wondering where they are going to go next.

However, this model requires a level of scale, flexibility and nimbleness in housing stock and lease arrangements. It also requires an ability to replace the transitional housing property quickly and in a manner that is like for like. As identified by the Advisory Committee to this project, a critical issue for domestic and family violence transitional housing is the safety and locational appropriateness of the property. Refuges often invest in security upgrades that are not standard to social housing stock. Moving the program/funding rather than the woman would require an appropriate replacement property to be sourced and upgraded in a speedy and efficient manner - delays in doing this (which are quite likely) or a lack of funding for security upgrades, would result in overall decreased capacity in any transitional housing program.



Transitional housing in Western Australia

In Western Australia, as in other states, domestic and family violence transitional housing has emerged from refuges including transitional housing programs as part of their service model, usually through the head leasing of public housing properties. In some cases, refuges have acquired transitional housing through ownership or private rental.⁶ The development of transitional housing has largely been ad hoc, in the absence of any system wide approach or State Government transitional housing programs or strategies.

As in other states and international examples, transitional housing programs in Western Australia are based on a housing plus wraparound support service model.

How many transitional housing properties are there in WA?

There is not a comprehensive count on the number of transitional housing properties that are linked to women's refuges in Western Australia.

In August 2022, the Department of Communities undertook a census of family and domestic violence accommodation services, finding 13 services that collectively provided 69 transitional housing properties.⁷ In a survey conducted as part of this project, 10 family and domestic violence accommodation services responded that they provide transitional housing, with a total of 71 transitional properties (range of properties was 1 to 17). As the census included three more refuges offering transitional housing than the project survey results (and neither method had a 100% response rate), it is likely that there are somewhat more than 71 transitional housing properties available as an exit pathway from refuges for victim-survivors. Only about one in four refuges have direct access to transitional housing options.

Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for transitional housing can vary slightly from service to service. The project survey found common criteria to be:

- The woman has been residing in a refuge and is ready to exit crisis accommodation
- The woman requires further support and safety matters addressed, before she is ready for independent living.

⁶ In a survey undertaken for this project, three refuges were providing rapid rehousing options using the private rental market.

⁷ The census found that seven metropolitan family and domestic violence accommodation services provide 50 transitional properties and six regional family and domestic violence accommodation services provide 19 transitional properties.



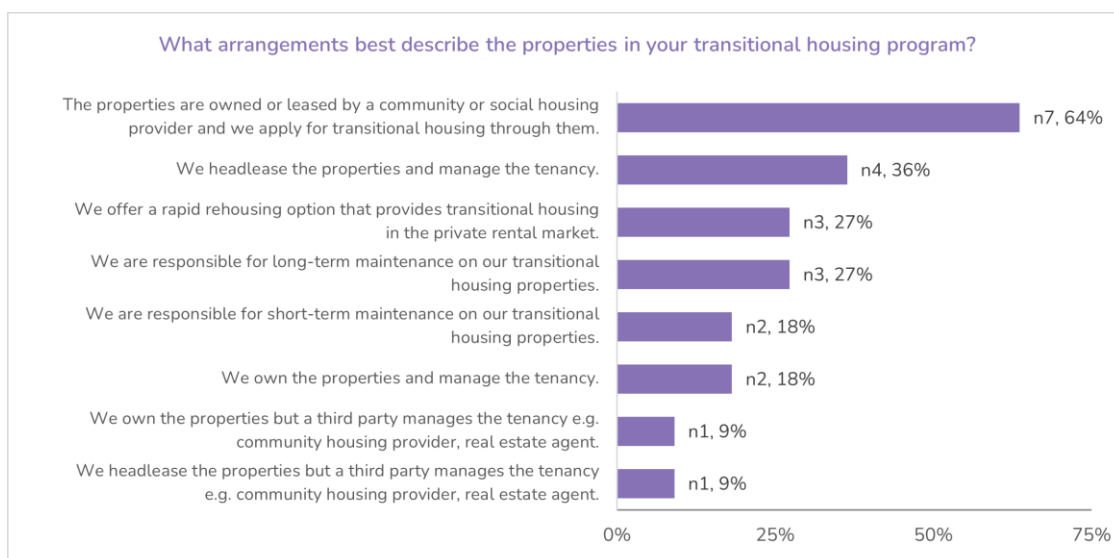
- The woman has the capacity to be reasonably self-reliant in matters such as getting children to school/day care, income for basic essentials, transportation and arranging day-to-day tasks.
- The woman is willing to engage in ongoing case management.
- The woman is ready and able to take on the responsibilities of a lease.
- The woman is willing to agree with other conditions that a refuge may have, for example, confidential address, restrictions on visitors, children must attend school.

As noted by CHOs interviewed for the project, eligibility conditions, such as engaging with support or restricting visitors, cannot be enforced as a condition of tenancy or form part of a tenancy agreement. So, whilst disengaging with support or not abiding by transitional housing 'rules' may be a factor in not renewing a transitional housing tenancy lease, it cannot constitute a tenancy breach as such. Tenancies agreements are for six months to a year, with extensions possible. Whilst the maximum length of stay is intended to be 12 months, four out of five of the refuges providing transitional housing said that the average stay was 12 months or more.

Tenancy and property management

Based on the project survey results, most refuges with transitional housing have separated the role of landlord and support provider by moving headleases, property and/or tenancy management to a CHOs, whilst maintaining nomination rights to the properties (Figure 2). Four refuges responding to the survey manage their own transitional housing. In some cases, there is a mix of models, depending on the mix of properties.

Figure 2: Property arrangements, project survey



Tenancy support

For many women leaving a refuge, finances can be both reduced and unstable. Combined with other circumstances and pressures, a transitional housing tenant may be at higher risk of not meeting standard lease requirements. This is particularly the case where transitional housing is prioritised for women with high risk and case complexities.

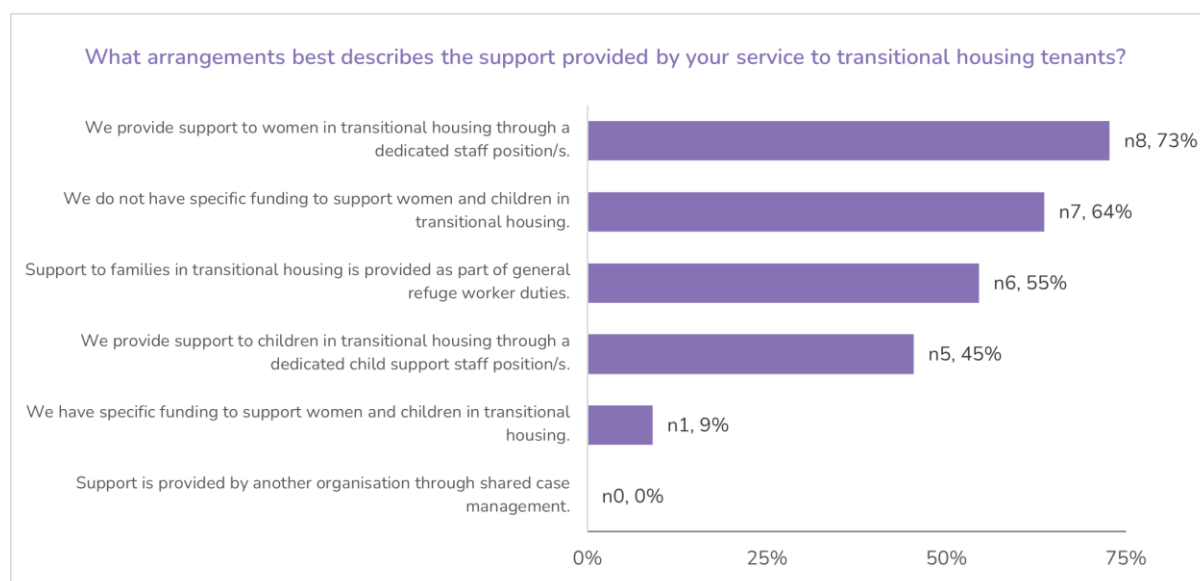
Regardless of whether or not the refuge or a CHO is the landlord, the transitional housing model includes tenancy support and access to financial/budgeting programs to ensure that the tenancy is sustainable and to reduce the risk of tenancy breaches.

Both refuges and CHOs (Foundation Housing and Housing Choices) spoke of the vital role that effective tenancy support on the part of refuges plays in ensuring transitional housing tenancies are successful.

Support services

Results of the project survey show that most refuges offering transitional housing provide support services through a dedicated staff outreach or transitional housing support position; and half provide support to children through a dedicated child support position. (Figure 3). In one case, the refuge provides domestic and family violence support, whilst a housing worker within the broader organisation provides tenancy support. Only one refuge said that they had specific funding to support women and children in transitional housing - the majority of refuges are self-funding support with donations or philanthropy, or absorbing the costs as part of outreach services or general refuge worker duties.

Figure 3: Support arrangements, project survey



Challenges

The biggest challenges refugees face in providing transitional housing is a lack of long-term, affordable housing pathways for women and children to move on to, followed by a lack of funding for support services and an inability to meet demand (Table 2).

Table 1: Challenges to providing transition housing, project survey

Frequency	Challenge
12	Lack of affordable housing options to move clients on.
9	Lack of funding for support staff.
9	Insufficient transitional housing to meet demand.
4	Tenancy and property management: anti-social behaviour, challenging behaviours, rent arrears, standards.
4	Client engagement/disengagement.
4	Rental income does not cover the cost of housing e.g. repairs/maintenance.
3	Safety - address of properties known in the town, perpetrators locating families in transitional properties.
2	Length of time to get their DOH property.
2	Practical help for moving in e.g. removalists, ingoings, whitegoods.
1	Separation of property management and support.
1	Some circumstances where transitional housing is not suitable.
1	Transitional rent charges are low so a disincentive to apply for market rent properties.

Demand for transitional housing

Estimating demand for transitional housing is limited by the available data. There is not any aggregated long-term data on the demand or provision of domestic and family violence transitional housing across the state. Nor are there published figures on how many women and children access refuges each year. Whilst SHS data shows that in 2020-21, 7,971 women in specialist homelessness services clients had experienced family and domestic violence in Western Australia, this figure covers all SHS programs.⁸ A break down on how many of these women went through a refuge is not publicly available.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia, Data for Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia: Specialist homelessness services clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-data/contents/what-services-or-supports-do-those-who-have-experienced-family-domestic-and-sexual-violence-use/specialist-homelessness-services-clients-who-have-experienced-family-and-domestic-violence>

Members of the Advisory Committee, drawing upon their own service data, estimate that between 30% to 70% of women going through their refuges in a year would be eligible and suitable for a transitional housing program.

Without customised reports from SHS data, it is not possible to answer questions such as:

- How many women and children were in Western Australian refuges in a year.
- How many women and children exited a refuge into transitional housing.
- How long women and children stayed in transitional housing.
- Where women and children went to after transitional housing.
- What were the support needs and services provided to women and children in transitional housing.

Further work is needed to quantify the potential demand, service provision and exit pathways for transitional housing for women and children exiting refuges in Western Australia.



Experiences of women living in transitional housing

To gain the perspectives of women, a survey was undertaken of current and past transitional housing tenants, and the project consultant met with the CWSW Lived Experience Advisory Group.

There were 15 responses to the survey - 10 women were currently living in a transitional housing property and 5 were past tenants. Half of the women currently living in transitional housing had been there for 10 months or more.

Women responding to the survey spoke deeply of the value that transitional housing has given them and the critical difference both a home and support has made to their recovery journey. What women liked most about transitional housing was the safety it provides, the continuity of refuge support, and a space and time to rebuild.

In asking what types of support women needed in transitional housing, emotional and housing support were the most frequently identified needs, followed by financial and parenting/family support (Figure 4).

Living in my own place with the support of the refuge service and advocates.

I have received support and all the help that I needed.

I feel safe and the children have their own space.

It's affordable and I am able to live independently with support.

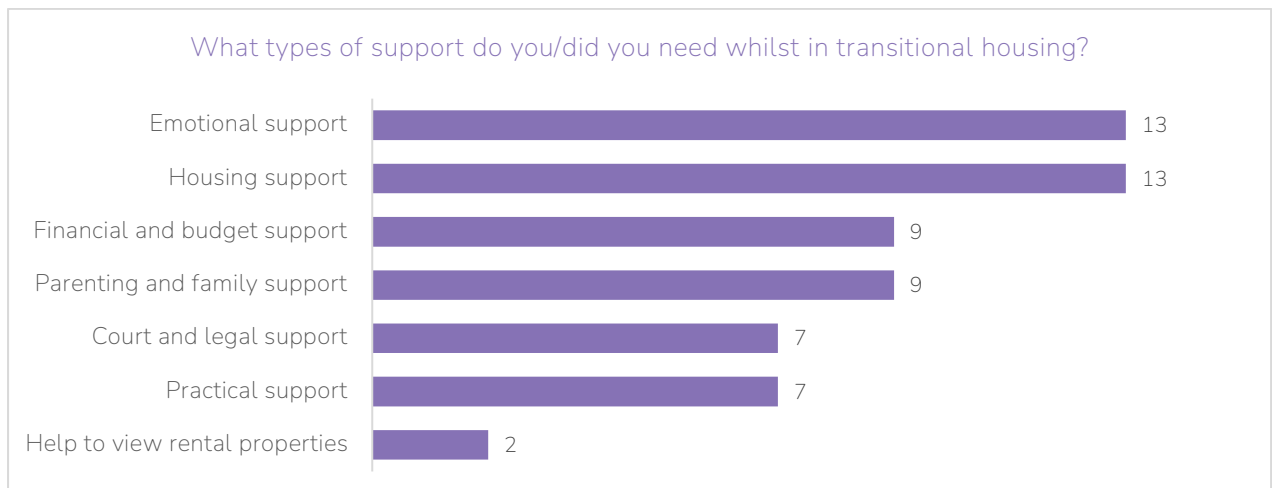
It made the transition from refuge to living independently easy.

To have a place to call home whilst waiting for our forever home.

Starting over my life with support nearby.

It was very important for me to be moving forward and starting over my life as being able to experience living in a house with my family and ourselves. I consider myself lucky to have been able to get one because its helped me a lot towards starting my life.

Figure 4: Support needs in transitional housing



What women living in transitional housing find most difficult is the stress and anxiety of trying to find long-term housing. A response from one woman illustrates the unsafe dilemmas that many women face - "I am near the end of lease and in talks with moving back in with ex-partner because I can't afford a rental on my own".

The highest need and biggest challenge for women and children in transitional housing is to find a long-term, affordable and appropriate home.

Other difficulties that women spoke about include:

- safety concerns
- social isolation and the emotional and physical toll on themselves and their children
- learning to be independent
- restrictions on visitors
- difficulties of living in shared housing.⁹

The availability of long-term, affordable and safe housing is what worries women the most about moving on from transitional housing. They also worry about the loss of support from the refuge, social isolation and mental wellbeing.

Members of the CWSW Lived Experience Advisory Group echoed the survey participants views that transitional housing provides a much needed 'in-between space' as women and children rebuild their lives. The appropriateness of the property and proximity to schools and family support were viewed as important success factors. The Advisory Group also emphasised the need for child focused support during transitional housing and help for women with parenting challenges, such as children acting out due to trauma.

Drawing upon published works that include lived experience voices, a qualitative study of Aboriginal women's perceptions of a South Australian transitional housing program showed that women most valued individualised, flexible, and open-ended support; as well as practical outcomes of stable, safe housing.¹⁰ The women reported that these features contributed to strengthened confidence and self-efficacy. Safety and individualised support also featured prominently in a US study.¹¹ Whilst women interviewed in this study did not always like the restrictions that can come with transitional housing, they valued having security measures, rules and ongoing safety planning - all which helped them feel safe.

⁹ Some transitional housing properties operate on a shared housing arrangement.

¹⁰ Wendt, S., & Baker, J. (2013). Aboriginal Women's Perceptions and Experiences of a Family Violence Transitional Accommodation Service. *Australian Social Work*, 66(4), 511-527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2012.754915>

¹¹ Melbin, A., Sullivan, C. M., & Cain, D. (2003). Transitional Supportive Housing Programs: Battered Women's Perspectives and Recommendations. *Affilia*, 18(4), 445-460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109903257623>



Cost of providing transitional housing and support

Apart from the provision of head leases, refuges receive no assistance to provide transitional housing properties.

The only source of income for properties comes from rents. Under head lease arrangements, refuges are responsible for short-term maintenance and property costs. Under deed of trusts, the refuge is also responsible for structural and cyclical maintenance.

Property and tenancy costs

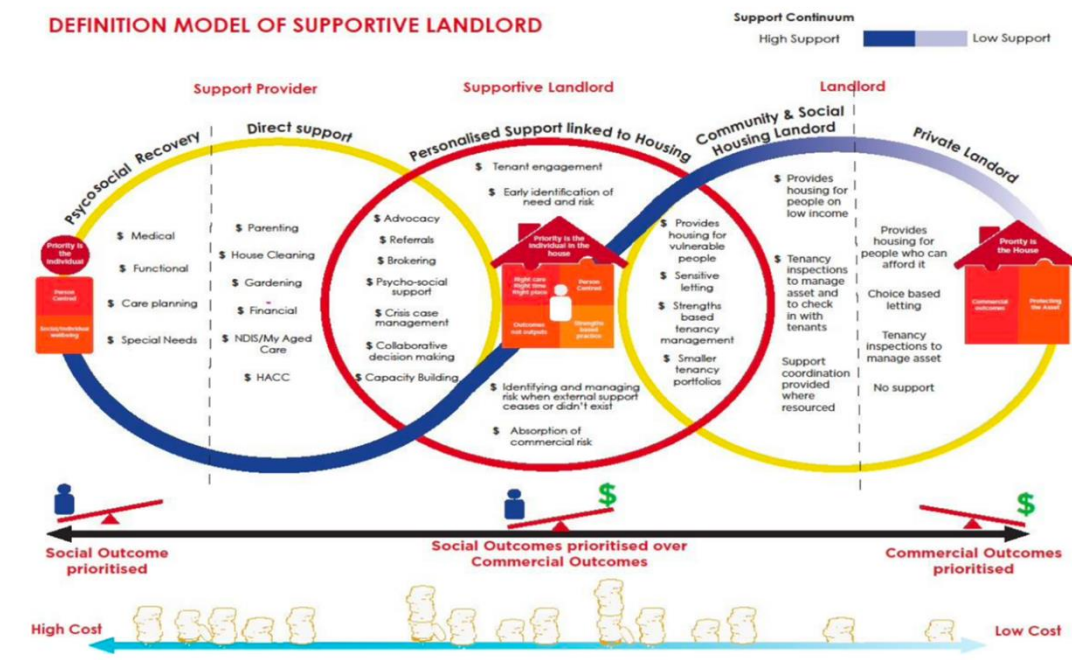
Social housing operates on the basis that rents cover property costs. However, findings of this project indicate that whilst transitional housing can be cost neutral against property costs, this is not always the case and transitional housing carries a level of commercial risk. Factors that impact financial viability include:

- The need to provide furnished properties and additional safety measures.
- Short and long-term maintenance requirements.
- The extent to which a tenant accrues tenant liability e.g. unpaid rent or damage.
- Accommodating tenants with no or very low incomes.
- A commitment to not evicting victim-survivors to homelessness.

As discussed previously, increased risk and case complexity factors can result in transitional housing tenancies requiring a higher level of tenancy support and special considerations than what would normally be the case. Refuges and CHOs are providing the role of a supportive landlord with complex tenancies without any assistance to mitigate risk.¹² An example of a supportive landlord function and its intersection with other areas of support is shown in Figure 5.

¹² In the interview with Foundation Housing it was discussed that the cost of supportive landlord roles can range from \$2,000-\$5,000 per property per year.

Figure 5: Supportive landlord model, Western Australian Association of Mental Health 2020¹³



In Western Australia, there is no recognition or compensation for domestic and family violence transitional housing providers to be a supportive landlord. This is in contrast to other transitional housing models reviewed. For example, the Victorian Transitional Housing Management Program provides a property allowance for maintenance, furnishing and re-establishment of properties. The Tasmanian Rapid Rehousing Program provides participating CHOs with an annual subsidy to assist with rents, furnishings or security upgrades. And there are Western Australian examples of supportive landlord fees being built into homelessness and mental health housing programs.

Support costs

There is no dedicated funding for the support component of transitional housing programs. Refuges are absorbing or finding ways to fund support services as best they can.

Members of the project Advisory Committee estimate support service costs to be between \$20,000 to \$26,000 per property per year. Variables include regional and remote locations and level of child specific support services.

¹³ Brankovich, J., Penter, C., McKinney, C. (2020) Review of the Personalised Support Linked To Housing: Supportive Landlord Services Program Area As Part Of The Independent Living Program, Western Australian Association of Mental Health. <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/3101/mhc-735-ilp-report.pdf>

Outcomes of transitional housing

In a systemic review on the effects of housing interventions on the wellbeing of women experiencing intimate partner violence, Yakubovich et al. found limited evaluative research on transitional housing or permanent supportive housing.¹⁴ The review largely found studies in relation to crisis accommodation interventions and the general findings were that benefits of housing interventions was strongest for mental health outcomes, intent to leave partner, perceived safety, and housing and partner-related stress.

Clark, Wood and Sullivan¹⁵ also found few evaluative studies on the effectiveness of transitional or rapid housing programs for domestic and family violence survivors. In order to build an evidence base, the researchers interviewed 35 transitional housing tenants to assess their views of the program they are in and their perceptions about whether a rapid rehousing approach would have been a good fit for them. Based on this study, the following insights were made:

- Transitional housing seems to be a good fit for those in very high danger, in need of social support and services, and in need of 12-24 months of full rental support.
- Rapid rehousing may be a good fit for those who have existing positive social networks and support, are seeking more autonomy, and have regular income and access to transportation.

In a randomised control study from the Netherlands, 136 women were recruited from shelters and assigned to a critical time intervention group or care-as-usual.¹⁶ The intervention had two major goals: to provide the client with emotional and practical support during the time of transition; and to maintain continuity of care by developing and strengthening links with the woman's support system. In quality of life measures, women in the experimental group experienced significantly less symptoms of PTSD during follow-up and were more likely to have a reduction in unmet care needs (by four fold).

¹⁴ Yakubovich, A.R., Bartsch, A., Metheny, N., Gesink, D., O'Campo, P. "Housing interventions for women experiencing intimate partner violence: a systematic review", *The Lancet Public Health*, Volume 7, ISSUE 1, E23-E35, January 01, 2022.

¹⁵ Clark, D., Leila Wood, L. and Sullivan, C., (2018) *Technical Report , Exploring Domestic Violence Survivors' Need for Transitional Housing*, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/exploring-domestic-violence-survivors%E2%80%99-need-transitional-housing>.

¹⁶ Lako, D.A.M., Beijersbergen, M.D., Jonker, I.E. et al. The effectiveness of critical time intervention for abused women leaving women's shelters: a randomized controlled trial. *Int J Public Health* 63, 513–523 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-017-1067-1>



There is a growing body of evidence from housing first programs on the benefits of providing a combined housing and support model as a way of reducing homelessness. A review of evaluations of housing first programs showed consistently high levels of tenants sustaining their housing (typically ranging from 66% to 90%), which is significantly higher compared to 'treatment as usual' approaches.¹⁷ Whilst housing first programs tend to focus on people experiencing chronic homelessness rather than survivors of domestic and family violence and there are some differences in approach, there are similarities to the housing first model and the transitional housing model.¹⁸ For example, both models are based on the presumption that helping people obtain stable housing allows them to address other concerns, a commitment to working with clients for as long as they need, the provision of wraparound supports and client driven case management.¹⁹

A recent study looking at the impact of a domestic violence housing first model (DVHF) on survivors' safety and housing stability found that survivors who received the housing plus support model reported greater improvements in housing stability at both the 6-month and 12-month time points compared to those receiving services as usual. At the 12-month time point, survivors who had received DVHF reported decreased physical, psychological, and economic abuse.²⁰

Transitional housing is often the first time women and children are living alone without the perpetrator and outside of crisis accommodation. This provides both opportunities and challenges for the parent-child relationship. Few studies have looked at the impact of transitional housing in regard to child and parenting outcomes. In a series of structured interviews with parents and children, Wood et al.²¹ found qualitative evidence that:

- Domestic violence transitional housing helps to strengthen the parent-child relationship through a focus on family connection and health.

¹⁷ Roggenbuck, C. (2022) Housing First: An evidence review of implementation, effectiveness and outcomes, report prepared by AHURI, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-papers/housing-first-an-evidence-review-of-implementation-effectiveness-and-outcomes>

¹⁸ Sullivan, C.M., López-Zerón, G., Farero, (2023), A. et al. Impact of the Domestic Violence Housing First Model on Survivors' Safety and Housing Stability: Six Month Findings. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, 395–406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00381-x>.

¹⁹ Cris M. Sullivan & Linda Olsen (2016) Common ground, complementary approaches: adapting the Housing First model for domestic violence survivors, *Housing and Society*, 43:3, 182-194

²⁰ Sullivan, C.M., López-Zerón, G., Farero, A. (2023), 'Impact of the Domestic Violence Housing First Model on Survivors' Safety and Housing Stability: Six Month Findings. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38, 395–406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-022-00381-x>

²¹ Wood, L., McGiffert, M., Fusco, R.A. et al. "The Propellers of My Life" The Impact of Domestic Violence Transitional Housing on Parents and Children. *Child Adolesc Soc Work J* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-021-00809-1>



- Transitional housing provides an opportunity for family stability.
- Secure housing allowed survivors to focus on their and their children's primary needs.
- Domestic violence transitional housing allows family to link in with a diverse range of trauma-informed resources and support to meet family goals, although waitlists often meant services such as child counselling were not easy to access.

In a Western Australian study, Zonta House Refuge Association (Zonta House) engaged the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia to assess the impact of its services and programs for women experiencing or at risk of experiencing family and domestic violence.²² The research provided evidence that wraparound support, complementary programs and referral pathways lead to positive outcomes for women. Findings in relation to the transitional accommodation program showed:

- Women residing in transitional accommodation appear to have greater engagement in programs offered by Zonta House than those residing in crisis accommodation, demonstrating that women are more likely to engage in programs once they have stable and safe accommodation. For example, 8% of crisis accommodation clients engaged in the Future Employment Connections program and Positive Pathways program, compared to 74% and 71% of women in transitional accommodation respectively.
- Life Matrix²³ scores for Zonta House transitional housing clients at intake and exit showed increased across the domains of emotional wellbeing, social wellbeing, community and cultural involvement, physical health and mental health.
- Improvements in the finances and employment domains among women exiting transitional accommodation exceeded the number of women referred to Future Employment Connections, suggesting that the provision of safe accommodation and wraparound support may have independent effects on women's sense of economic and financial independence and wellbeing.
- Women who exited transitional accommodation who were identified as having further needs were provided with a range of referrals around parenting and family relationships, legal and court assistance, advocacy/liaison, community support, and health and wellbeing.

²² Lester, L., Seivwright, A., Flatau, P., Crane, E., & Minto, K. (2021). Supporting Women and Children Experiencing Family and Domestic Violence: The Zonta House Impact Report. Centre for Social Impact UWA: Perth. <https://doi.org/10.25916/z9z0-qq04>.

²³ Outcome measurement tool used by Zonta House.



- Upon exiting crisis accommodation, 24% of women remained engaged in Zonta House programs compared to 45% of women exiting transitional accommodation.

Housing pathways as a critical variable to outcomes

A critical factor influencing the efficiency and effectiveness of transitional housing programs is the ability of women and children to exit transitional housing into secure, appropriate and affordable long-term housing. The lack of housing pathways from crisis and transitional housing was identified as the single biggest barrier to achieving positive outcomes in both the literature review and consultations undertaken for this project.

For many SHS clients there is little change in their housing situation over the time in which they receive support.²⁴ AIHW data shows that housing outcomes for SHS clients did not change significantly over the period of support, with 39% homeless at start of support and 29% homeless at end of support.²⁵

Acute shortages in long-term housing pathways have created bottlenecks in both crisis and transitional accommodation - women and children are increasingly being turned away from refuges because they are at capacity.²⁶

In 2020, valentine et al. investigated how policy and program responses are experienced by key population groups in different types of housing tenure. The study drew on critical analysis of three concepts: *vulnerability as a cause of homelessness*, *intersectionality as a lens on the complexity of vulnerability*, and *service integration as a means of addressing multiple vulnerabilities*.²⁷ Key findings from the study include:

- Moving from short-term or transitional accommodation into permanent, independent housing is very difficult, and sometimes unachievable, for women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

²⁴ AHURI brief, October 2022, Housing, homelessness and domestic and family violence

<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/brief/housing-homelessness-and-domestic-and-family-violence>

²⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22,

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-who-have-experienced-family-and-domestic-violence>.

²⁶ Flanagan, K., Blunden, H., valentine, k., and Henriette, J. (2019) *Housing outcomes after domestic and family violence*, AHURI Final Report No. 311, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/311>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-4116101.

²⁷ valentine, k., Cripps, K., Flanagan, K., Habibis, D., Martin, C. and Blunden, H. (2020) *Inquiry into integrated housing support for vulnerable families*, AHURI Final Report No. 339, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/339>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri7116001.

- Services are not able to compensate for the absence of affordable, suitable housing across the housing system.
- Current policy responses are framed around an integrated support model, however housing provision, so critical to positive outcomes, has only a marginal role.
- Tensions can exist between social housing policy and tenancy management, and integrated service objectives. There are also tensions and gaps between the domestic and family violence, child protection, family law and housing service systems.
- Constraints in housing pathways appear to be a more significant barrier to safe and sustainable housing, than problems around integrated support services.
- Supply of affordable, secure, long-term housing is a critical issue. Social housing investment can address barriers to pathways to safety and recovery.

Cripps and Habibis found that Aboriginal women and children, especially those living in regional or remote locations, have particularly limited housing pathways, with many becoming trapped in a revolving door between crisis and transitional services, and homelessness.²⁸ The consequences of limited housing pathways puts Aboriginal women at higher risk of having their children removed and can compromise reunification if stable housing cannot be secured. The intersection between housing and child protection has a significant impact on Aboriginal women and children and a profound impact on the social health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities.

²⁸ Cripps, K. and Habibis, D. (2019) Improving housing and service responses to domestic and family violence for Indigenous individuals and families, AHURI Final Report 320, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/320>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri-7116201.

A study by Flanagan etc al.²⁹ found that all jurisdictions have adopted strategic responses to domestic and family violence, however, attention to the housing needs of women and children leaving perpetrators of domestic and family violence is much less prominent, "with limited evidence of widespread take-up of interventions designed to address systemic barriers across the housing market" (p.2). Flanagan's analysis of SHS data was that specialist homelessness assistance is not functioning as a mechanism for moving people along housing pathways.

...the immediate response to domestic and family violence is effective and timely, although constrained by resources and growing demand. The main challenge facing services and their clients is the lack of pathways by which women can move on from crisis and transitional responses into secure, long-term housing.

Flanagan etc al., 2019:73

Further:

- There is little integration between the domestic and family violence response and the wider housing system.
- Policies and practices in other areas of government can undermine positive housing outcomes for victim survivors. For example:
 - inadequate income support payments
 - limited protection and assistance for women sponsored to come to Australia
 - intersection between the child protection and family violence systems
 - Family Court decisions that require violent ex-partners to continue to have access to children.

²⁹ Flanagan, K., Blunden, H., valentine, k., and Henriette, J. (2019) *Housing outcomes after domestic and family violence*, AHURI Final Report No. 311, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/311>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-4116101.

A service model for supported transitional housing

The research project found that there is a well-articulated supported transitional housing service model amongst Western Australian refuges providing such programs.

A program logic model of transitional housing and support which shows its common elements is provided in Appendix 3, adapted with permission from one developed by Zonta House. Supported transitional housing is an extension of the refuge support model (Figure 6), in that:

- There is ongoing risk assessment and safety planning.
- Staff work with women to identify needs, set goals and develop a support plan.
- A holistic, integrated lens is applied to support, including financial and economic independence, physical and emotional wellbeing, housing support, legal assistance, parenting assistance, practical support, and community and cultural connection.
- Multi-agency case management is undertaken, as required.
- Children are supported and viewed as clients in their own right.
- Women and children have access to programs that are offered to all refuge clients. Depending on the refuge, this may include counselling, financial literacy, employment pathways, support groups, community activities and school holiday programs.
- Where women and children require assistance from other service providers, the support worker provides active referral pathways and advocacy, if required.



Figure 6: Support model of transitional housing - for women and children

As an extension of the refuge model, supported transitional housing is provided within a domestic and family violence informed framework. Support workers have specialised knowledge and experience in working with victim-survivors.

Types of support needed

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data provides a picture of the interconnecting and multilayered support needs of victim-survivors. Table 1 shows 2021–22 SHS data for clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by need for services and assistance provided.³⁰ The data also illuminates unmet need. For example, in 2021–22, 9.2% of clients had a need for legal/financial services, of which 43.8% had the need met. The published SHS data doesn't show figures for Western Australia only.³¹

"...the kind of support refuges provide the women and children, and how refuge programs offer a special type of support that requires high levels of empathy and understanding of the women and children's unique circumstances. This particular kind of support flowing through to transitional housing, ultimately promotes healing and growth for the family."

P. Slater

Table 2: SHS clients who have experienced family and domestic violence, by need for services and assistance and service provision status, 2021–22

Service and assistance type	Need identified as % of clients	Provided as % of need identified
Accommodation provision	58.6	62.6
Assistance to sustain housing tenure	26.5	79.7
Mental health	13.1	45.0
Family	14.9	64.8
Disability	2.1	50.1
Drug/alcohol	3.7	39.9
Legal/financial services	9.2	43.8
Immigration/cultural services	8.8	85.6
Other specialist services	26.0	71.6
General services	97.3	98.3

Under general services, the top ten need and assistance types were:

- Advice/information
- Assistance for trauma
- Family/relationship assistance

³⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Specialist homelessness services 2021–22, Table FDV.2, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data>

³¹ It is possible to get some SHS data at WA level and some DFV SHS data at national level - it is difficult to get both DFV and WA level SHS data through published data sets.

- Assistance for family/domestic violence
- Advocacy/liaison on behalf of client
- Material aid/brokerage
- Financial information
- Transport
- Living skills/personal development
- Legal information

The project survey asked refugees what they have observed to be most needed by women and children during their time in transitional housing. The highest need, identified by all respondents, was housing support to find a long term home. The next most frequently observed needs were:

- Ongoing risk assessment and safety planning.
- Tenancy support and education.
- Access to counselling for both women and children.
- Financial support and education.
- Legal assistance and court support.
- Assistance with parenting and schools.
- Practical support e.g. transport, cost of school uniforms, storage.
- Support to build friendships and support networks.
- Support to engage in education or employment.
- Living skills education and support.

Intersectionality

Refuges prioritise transitional housing for clients with a higher level of safety concerns and/or support complexity.

Domestic and family violence occurs within a web of intersectionality that influences risk, impacts, responses, options and pathways to reestablishment. Safety and complexity can be influenced by poverty, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, disability, child protection matters, interactions with the justice system and immigration status - just to name a few of the socio/economic/cultural factors that contribute to safety and complexity for women and children.

SHS data provides some insight into the intersection between domestic and family violence, mental health and problematic drug or alcohol use. SHS data shows that in Western Australia, in 2021–22, of the around 7,700 clients who have experienced family and domestic violence³²:

³² Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, Specialist homelessness services annual report 2021–22, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data> and



- 15% of clients reported experiencing problematic drug or alcohol use.
- 37% of clients had a current mental health issue.
- 9.2% of clients reported both mental health and problematic drug or alcohol use.

National SHS data for 2021-22 for clients who have experienced family and domestic violence shows that:³³

- 28% of clients identified as Indigenous.
- 62% of clients had previously been assisted by a SHS agency.
- 62% of clients were at risk of homelessness at the start of support.
- 42% of clients who experienced family and domestic violence and who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support were housed by the end of support.

Whilst an overall supported transitional housing service model has emerged amongst Western Australian refugees, further work is needed to develop models that speak to the tailored needs of specific communities and cohorts.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-who-have-experienced-family-and-domestic-violence>

³³ Equivalent published WA data not currently available.



Appendix 1: Research methods

Advisory Committee

Ali White, South West Refuge

Petrina Slater, Wungening

Mel Rowe, Orana House

Kelda Oppermann, Zonta House

Paula O'Leary, Shelter WA

Anne Moore, Lucy Saw Centre

Alison Evans, Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing

Tanya Elson, Ruah

Andrea Creado, Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre

Leanne Barron and Tahnya Wood, Starick Services

Project consultant

Christina Kadmos, Kalico Consulting

Interviews and contacts

Natalie Sangalli, General Manager, Housing Choices	WA	Tel Interview
Alison Paterson, Community Services Manager and Allan Wilkerson, Housing Programs and Policy Manager, Foundation Housing	WA	Online interview
Ali White, CEO, South West Refuge	WA	Online interview
Kelda Oppermann, CEO, Zonta House	WA	Online interview
Petrina Slater, Manager Family Support and Christina Batty, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation	WA	Online interview
Daphne White, The Orange Story	WA	Tel Interview
Mel Rowe, Orana House	WA	Tel Interview
Courtney Wamala, Practice Development Advisor, Safe and Equal	VIC	Tel Interview

Homes Victoria	VIC	Email response
Engender Equality, TAS	TAS	Email response
Jacqui Ford, A/Front Door Coordinator South Tasmania, Colony 47	TAS	Tel Interview
Janet Saunder, CEO, Hobart Women's Shelter	TAS	Tel Interview
Women's Safety Services, SA	SA	Email response
Laura Cremen, Alliance Senior Manager Domestic and Family Violence Safety Alliance	SA	Tel Interview
QLD Housing and Homelessness Service	QLD	Email response
End Violence Against Women, QLD	QLD	Email response
Debbie Bruford, Service Leader at UnitingCare Network Brisbane	QLD	Tel Interview
Stacey Miers, Principal Planning Officer, Shelter NSW	NSW	Tel Interview
FACS NSW	NSW	Email response
Domestic Violence NSW	NSW	Email response

Other methods

Meeting with CWSW Lived Experience Advisory Group

Survey of WA refuges (23 responses)

Survey of current and past tenants of transitions housing (15 response)

Online Coffee and Chat sector consultation discussion (13 attendees)

Specialist Homelessness Services data analysis (published data only)

Literature review



Appendix 2: Jurisdictional scan of transitional housing models

New South Wales

In October 2021, the NSW government announced a \$484.3 million investment for housing and specialist supports for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.³⁴ The package includes:

- \$426.6 million over four years to expand core and cluster refuges that will support up to an additional 2,900 women and children each year.
- \$52.5 million over four years in partnership with the community housing sector, to provide approximately 200 affordable homes for women experiencing domestic and family violence.
- \$5.2 million over four years for a trial in two areas to provide dedicated supports for up to 3,200 accompanied children and young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, with a focus on those impacted by domestic and family violence.

In an interview with Shelter NSW, it was noted that the bulk of investment has been to move refuges to core and cluster models. In doing so, anecdotal evidence suggests that the average stays in refuges seem to be bit longer (around nine months), with an increase in transition from the refuge directly to long-term housing options.

Start Safely

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice operates a housing rental assistance service called Rent Choice Start Safely³⁵ for people who do not have a stable and secure place to live due to domestic or family violence. Start Safely supports women to:

- help find a safe and affordable place to rent in the private rental market
- subsidise rent for up to 3 years
- assist with education and employment options.

Eligibility includes a willingness to engage with support services, if recommended. Application is direct to the Department and, if approved, the applicant finds the rental property. The rent must be deemed to be affordable to the tenant - 50% of

³⁴ <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/supporting-family-domestic-sexual-violence-services/dfv-programs-funding/new-investment-housing-related-supports-for-women-children-escaping-dfv/introduction-to-the-new-investment.html>

³⁵ <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/start-safely>



income plus CRA. For the first 12 months, tenants pay 25% of weekly income plus 100% of any CRA. The amount of rent will go up gradually after 12 months. The program also funds private rental support services and brokerage up to \$2,000. In 2019-20, Rent Choice Start Safely assisted 4,792 households, including 8,431 children.

Transitional Housing Plus

Transitional Housing Plus provides housing integrated with support to assist tenants stabilise their lives over a longer tenure period (six-month leases that can be renewed up to five years). The target groups are vulnerable young people and women with children experiencing domestic and family violence. Applicants for Transitional Housing Plus are assessed by a local nomination panel comprising members from relevant support services, government agencies and other community service organisations. The panel makes a recommendation to the housing provider. The rent paid by tenants is scaled to increase over the tenure period, on an annual basis. According to the policy guidance notes,³⁶ the housing provider must enter into a formal partnership with a support provider/s to ensure that tenants have access to appropriate support over their tenure period.

Queensland

There are three types of transitional housing programs funded by the Queensland Government whereby tenants are supported to stabilise their circumstances before moving on to social housing or the private rental market:

- Community Rent Scheme: Registered CHOs lease properties from private landlords or the Queensland Government, and then lease them to tenants. The CHO then becomes the landlord of the properties.
- Community-Managed Housing – Studio Units: CHOs provide transitional housing to eligible people on the housing register that have been assessed as having 'Very High' or 'High' housing needs.
- Same House Different Landlord: The Queensland Government leases public housing properties to CHOs, which rent the properties to eligible tenants. The tenancy and the property are transferred back to the state once the tenant can manage a longer term tenancy and the tenant becomes a public housing tenant.

³⁶ Family and Community Services Housing NSW. (2014). *Transitional Housing Plus Policy Guidance Note*, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=333296>



There is one application and allocation process for transitional through the social housing register. Domestic and family violence services have no role in nomination or allocation.

Outside of these schemes, refuges may have transitional housing properties that they have acquired through headlease arrangements. According to a Service Leader at UnitingCare Network, costs for these properties are a major issue, especially maintenance.³⁷ Refuges can apply for a maintenance exemption if they can show hardship, in which case maintenance then reverts back to public housing. However, the exemption brings other issues e.g. the public housing standard is to paint every 10 years, so refuges often end up paying for extra maintenance work.

Five years ago, funding for refuges was restructured to include outreach support as core work. Targets were put in to drive the change and ensure increased attention to outreach and in the home support. However - the funding levels didn't change and refuges were expected to absorb the targets themselves. This has had a huge impact on refuges.

South Australia

In 2021, changes to the contracting model created five alliances - four place based and one Domestic and Family Violence Safety Alliance (statewide). The Alliance is a partnership model between specialist homelessness services, Department of Human Services and Office for Women. The alliance has been in operation for approximately two years, with 18-19 services across 8-9 organisations.

There are two transitional housing programs which predate the Alliance:

- Transitional Housing Program: Approximately 130 properties all held by CHOs. This program does not come with specific support funding. Support is provided by local domestic and family violence services as part of outreach.
- Supportive Housing Program: Approximately 130 properties all held by CHOs or public housing authority. Comes with housing support funding through local providers (not domestic and family violence specific). Applicants must be eligible for social housing and agree to enter into a case management plan with a support agency. Focus on support for 12 months to live independently and maintain a tenancy.

With the formation of the Alliance, transitional housing application and allocation processes went to the Alliance to coordinate. A specific number of transitional housing properties are allocated to the Alliance. Applications for transitional

³⁷ Interview for this project.



housing come from across the state. The Alliance does not keep a waitlist. When there is a vacancy, the Alliances advertises that nominations are open. Applications must be linked to a domestic and family violence service provider. A panel meets and makes an allocation decision.

Tasmania

Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Program

Tasmania offers the Rapid Rehousing program for people affected by domestic and family violence.³⁸ Under the program, a CHO takes on a 1-3 year headlease on a property in the private rental market and sub-lets to an eligible tenant.³⁹ The community housing provider receives a \$13,000 subsidy per year to assist with rent, furnishing, waiving bonds or security upgrades. The program can be used by victim survivors or perpetrators (so that women can stay in the home). The target of this project is 50 properties statewide. Application to the program is made by domestic and family violence support services through Housing Connect.⁴⁰

Housing Connect can refer applicants to intensive housing support (coaching and case management) through six organisations across the state, some of which specialise in domestic and family violence. As a matter of course, domestic and family violence rapid rehousing tenants are referred to intensive support. Packages provide practical support to people experiencing domestic and family violence by providing up to \$6,000 to purchase basic items, pay bills and cover relocation cost and furnishings. Whilst in Rapid Rehousing, a tenant has highest priority on the waitlist to move people through.

When the Rapid Rehousing rental subsidy ends, the tenant has the option to continue living in the property as a non-subsidised tenant paying full rent. However, the program does not guarantee that a longer term lease will be available or offered to the tenant at the end of the head lease.

Transitional Housing Program

Centacare Evolve Housing manages transitional housing on behalf of Housing Tasmania. Transitional housing is allocated to people through Housing Connect. A Housing Connect support worker will assist tenants manage some of their immediate needs and work towards longer term housing options.

³⁸ <https://www.homestasmania.com.au/Private-Rental/Family-violence-rapid-rehousing>

³⁹ Centacare Evolves Housing holds the leases across the state.

⁴⁰ Colony 47 is the Front Door in the South and Anglicare in the North and North West.



The CEO of Hobart Women's Shelter⁴¹ notes that with only 50 Rapid Rehousing properties across the state and limited transitional housing through Centacare Evolve Housing, it is difficult to get women into the programs.

Victoria

In 2016, Victoria established a Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce to identify and respond to blockages in refuge and transitional housing. In April 2016, the Victorian Government announced a \$152 million package, the Family Violence Housing Blitz, designed to providing victim-survivors of family violence with improved access to housing options. The package included:

- \$40 million over two years for flexible support packages – providing flexible tailored responses (up to \$10,000) that meet the individual needs of victims of family violence.
- The program is run through regional providers, with statewide coordination by Safe and Equal.
- \$50 million over one year for rapid housing assistance – providing 185 new social housing properties as a first stage and head leasing for up to 124 dwellings in the private rental market.
- \$16 million over one year of private rental assistance – providing private rental assistance advice and brokerage to access or sustain private rental tenancies.
- \$25 million over two years for new units of crisis accommodation and upgrades of existing accommodation.
- \$21 million over two years for family violence refuge redevelopment to core and cluster models.

The Victorian Minister for Housing has commenced reporting annually to the Parliamentary Committee on Family Violence on the extent of unmet housing demand among people affected by family violence, the average and range of current stays by women and children in crisis and transitional accommodation, progress in meeting the benchmark of six weeks in crisis accommodation and proposed actions for meeting the continuing housing demand from people affected by family violence.⁴²

⁴¹ Interviewed for this project.

⁴² Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2021, Reporting: unmet housing demand among people affected by family violence Acquitting against Recommendation 20 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, State of Victoria, <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/unmet-housing-demand-people-affected-family-violence>



Transitional Housing Management Program

The Transitional Housing Management Program assists individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to establish secure housing as soon as possible. There are 12 transitional housing providers in Victoria who manage properties allocated to the program by Homes Victoria. In 2022-23 more than 3,000 transitional housing properties are occupied at any one time.⁴³

The program includes funding for transitional housing support managers. Application to transitional housing is via a referral to Entry Point or nomination from a support service. According to program guidelines:⁴⁴

- Property allowances are provided for all DoH owned and leased transitional properties, for minor responsive maintenance and re-establishment of properties.
- A grant is provided for furnishing of all newly purchased or leased transitional properties.
- A no-income status does not preclude people from access to transitional housing.
- Priority access is given to people exiting crisis supported accommodation services who require continued support and housing assistance.

⁴³ From email communication with Homes Victoria.

⁴⁴ Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding May 2014, <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201705/Homelessness-Services-Guidelines-and-Conditions-of-Funding-May-2014.pdf>

Appendix 3: Program logic of transitional housing and support in WA

Transitional Housing and Support Program Logic

