



PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION  
NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Budget 2024-25

December 2023

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## Northern Territory Housing and Homelessness Facts



**13,104** Territorians were experiencing homelessness on Census night 2021.<sup>i</sup>



On any given day in the Northern Territory, Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) support over **2,400** clients.<sup>ii</sup>



The Territory has seen a **13.4%** increase in the number of Territorians aged 55+ experiencing homelessness.<sup>iii</sup>



**75.6%** of Territorians experiencing homelessness live in severely overcrowded conditions.<sup>iv</sup>

### In Real Terms, Case Study

Catherine is a Walpiri woman living in Central Australia. She is an amputee and uses a wheelchair while she waits for a prosthetic limb. Her previous prosthetic limb was damaged in a domestic violence incident. Catherine is a priority public housing applicant and has been waiting for housing since 2016. She is eligible for transitional housing, but the unit she was offered was found not to be appropriate to her access needs. Other transitional housing providers with accessible units had no availability.

While she waits for an accessible unit to become available or for a public housing allocation, Catherine moves amongst family or stays in short term accommodation when an accessible room is available. Despite having an NDIS plan, Catherine is unable to fully realise the potential of NDIS supports in unstable accommodation. Often, conflict arises amongst her family members because of Catherine's wheelchair.

Catherine's teenage son worries about his mum and the family's mobility means he doesn't consistently attend school. Catherine is stressed because she is constantly worried about accommodation.

Catherine is homeless because there is a lack of affordable and appropriate housing in the Territory and much of the little stock there is, is not accessible. Catherine lacks a basic right to exercise choice over her housing. The impacts of Catherine's homelessness are widespread. Catherine's story is not unique, it is one of over 13,000 stories.

\*To ensure the confidentiality of the woman described in this case study, her real name has not been used.

## NT Shelter

NT Shelter is the Northern Territory's peak body for affordable housing and homelessness. We advocate for affordable and appropriate housing for all people of the Northern Territory, especially those on low incomes who are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged in the housing market.

NT Shelter's work involves advocacy and communications, research and policy development, sector consultation and coordination, and capacity building.

NT Shelter is proud to work with and represent a range of organisations that make a significant contribution each day to the lives of people for whom housing is unaffordable and inaccessible. Our member organisations are specialist providers of services relating to housing and homelessness. Their focus is on low to moderate income Territorians who have a wide range of social and affordable accommodation needs, including crisis, transitional, short-term, low-cost, and supported housing. Many NT Shelter member organisations also provide professional services to support people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

NT Shelter membership is as follows:



## Executive Summary

NT Shelter is pleased to submit our Pre-Budget Submission to the Northern Territory Government for consideration in the development of the Northern Territory Budget 2024-25.

The Northern Territory has a rare opportunity to capitalise on the most significant Commonwealth investment in housing in over a decade. Given the critical nature of the housing and homelessness crisis in the Northern Territory, where homelessness sits at 12 times the national average,<sup>v</sup> we urge the Northern Territory Government to seize the moment and build upon current and future levels of investment in housing to improve the lives of the thousands of Territorians who currently live without affordable and appropriate housing.

The costs of inaction on this crisis are significant in terms of both economic and social outcomes. Research estimates that failure to act on the shelter needs of the Australian population will cost the community \$25.1 billion per year by 2051 due to, amongst other things, poor health and employment outcomes and less diverse communities.<sup>vi</sup> The provision of desperately needed housing under the Housing Accord, Housing Australia Future Fund and Social Housing Accelerator Program will alleviate shocking levels of unmet housing need to a degree. It is essential that the Northern Territory partner closely with front line housing and homelessness services, registered community housing providers and other property sector stakeholders to ensure the opportunities that these Commonwealth initiatives provide are fully realized.

However, despite reasons for optimism in respect of increased urban housing supply, there is much more that needs to be done on homelessness. NT Shelter acknowledges that due to funding arrangements under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), the Northern Territory is structurally disadvantaged in its ability to provide the range and depth of homelessness and housing programs needed in the Northern Territory. There is a very limited window of opportunity to secure homelessness funding based on need.

In this submission, we outline key Territory and region-specific housing and homelessness asks that warrant inclusion in the 2024-25 Budget process. A summary of these asks is included below.

## Summary of NT Shelter Pre-Budget Submission Asks

1. Safeguard and adequately restore funding for the Northern Territory's frontline housing and homelessness services.
  - Increase base funding for frontline services organisations by a further 2.5% in 2024-25 and by 5% in 2025-26 and each subsequent year across the forward estimates in order to restore sector funding to comparable levels in 2018.
  - From the commencement of 2024-25, cease the application of efficiency dividends to frontline housing and homelessness services
  - Provide sufficient wage and CPI cost indexation to grant agreements to ensure that grant funding is maintained in real terms i.e. able to meet costs of Fair Work Australia National Wage Case decisions and other increased costs of doing business in an inflationary environment.
2. Complete the third tranche of reviews of the Northern Territory Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) to bring Territory legislation in line with other Australian jurisdictions and provide fairer laws for renters.
3. Prevent loss of 770 affordable National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties.
4. Increase investment in tenancy support programs.
5. Through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, undertake a pilot program making available Business Development Advisor/s to the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) sector to overcome barriers to successfully securing finance.
6. Undertake a feasibility study for a Youth Foyer in Alice Springs.
7. Fund a feasibility study exploring options for transitional accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence (DFV) in Tennant Creek.
8. Fund a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to build internal capacity to access financing opportunities to establish short stay visitor accommodation in Katherine.

# NT Shelter Pre-Budget Submission Asks in Detail

1. Safeguard and adequately restore funding for the Northern Territory’s frontline housing and homelessness services.

Since the commencement of five-year funding agreements for our sector from 1 July 2018, the gap between Award wage cost increases and sector funding has risen to 16% in nominal terms. This is attributable to the cumulative impact of annual efficiency dividends and absence of funding compensation for National Wage Case decisions.

The continued erosion of funding for NT Shelter member organisations, frontline housing and homelessness services, hampers our collective efforts to reduce rough sleeping and provide housing supports to Territorians in need at a time when demand continues to skyrocket.

To illustrate the extent to which Northern Territory Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) providers are stretched, the number of clients per 10,000 in 2022-23 was 404. In comparison, for Australia as a whole, the number is 105.<sup>vii</sup>



**One in 25** Territorians received assistance from an SHS in 22-23, compared to the national rate of one in 95.<sup>viii</sup>



In the last ten years, the rate of Territorians receiving assistance from SHS has increased **3.6%**. In most other jurisdictions, the rate has decreased or remained stable.<sup>ix</sup>



The level of unmet demand for SHS rises year-on-year, increasing **53%** in the last five years alone.<sup>x</sup>



Only **26%** of Territorians who are homeless upon presentation to an SHS are assisted into housing.<sup>xi</sup>

Since 2019, the Northern Territory Government has applied efficiency dividends to grant-funded services. Some grants to services deemed as ‘frontline’ have had a discounted efficiency dividend rate applied during that time. These include youth justice, domestic violence, family support and out of home care services.

The continued exclusion of homelessness services from the definition of frontline is anomalous and fails to recognise the role of sector staff providing direct frontline assistance across our communities to highly

vulnerable Territorians with complex and multiple needs. Homelessness services staff perform work that is identical or highly comparable to many of the categories of services listed above.

The COVID-10 pandemic highlighted the frontline nature of these services and their work and roles were appropriately recognised the Chief Health Officer's directions and definitions of essential services.

The situation in comparison to other frontline services is inconsistent in many respects. For example, two of NT Shelter's member organisations provide crisis accommodation and services to women experiencing domestic family violence. One has the discounted efficiency dividend applied to their grant funding each year and the other doesn't. This is an example of different treatment of organisations performing the same work as a result of them being funded by different sections of the same agency. It is something that can readily be fixed.

We are now at the point where funding for housing and homelessness services has fallen that far behind 2018 levels that the financial sustainability of several programs and organisational staffing levels are seriously under threat. Already our sector has had to reduce investment in key areas such as training and professional development, staffing levels, program evaluation, outreach, and other areas. This is eroding the efficacy of programs in an environment of growing demand against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis. Apart from the costs to individuals and families not receiving the support they need, unmet demand results in additional costs to Government across various agencies.

To maintain the capacity of funded services to effectively perform the services that they have been contracted to perform, the following is required:

- Increase base funding for frontline services organisations by a further 2.5% in 2024-25 and by 5% in 2025-26 and each subsequent year across the forward estimates to restore sector funding to comparable levels in 2018.
- From the commencement of 2024-25, cease the application of efficiency dividends to frontline housing and homelessness services.
- Provide sufficient wage and CPI cost indexation to grant agreements to ensure that grant funding is maintained in real terms i.e. able to meet costs of Fair Work Australia National Wage Case decisions and other increased costs of doing business in an inflationary environment.

Should the Northern Territory Government not cease the application of efficiency dividends to non-government organisations across the human services sector, Cabinet's definition of frontline services must be expanded to include services that receive specialist homelessness service (SHS) funding from Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC).



2. Complete the third tranche of reviews of the Northern Territory Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) to bring Territory legislation in line with other Australian jurisdictions and provide fairer laws for renters.

The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) plays a critical role in safeguarding the housing needs of Northern Territory renters, ensuring that tenants are not evicted unnecessarily into homelessness and providing pathways for people out of homelessness into accommodation. It provides governance over the suitability of dwellings for habitation, security of tenure, appropriate protections and service standards, and safety and control of the living space.

Just under 50% of the Northern Territory population rent.<sup>xii</sup> This is a higher percentage than any other jurisdiction. In remote Northern Territory, almost all housing is public housing which is subject to the RTA. Remote Northern Territory is also a part of the NT where tenants live with significant vulnerabilities including poverty and crowding, both of which occur at higher rates than anywhere else in Australia. Renting in the Northern Territory must be fair, safe, and certain.

NT Shelter commends the Northern Territory Government on recent amendments to the RTA. This is an important step towards ensuring fairer renting laws for renters and will finally bring the Northern Territory closer in line with national standards. However, there is more important reform to be done. Striking a reasonable and fair balance for landlords and tenants alike through progressive and contemporary legislation aligned to the Northern Territory's economic and social goals is important and achievable, particularly during an unprecedented rental crisis with significantly escalating rents and incredibly low levels of available stock to rent.

Among others, key areas of RTA reform that still need to be delivered are:

- Reasonable rent increases.
- Minimum standards for rental premises, including public housing, community housing and other forms of housing and accommodation as appropriate.
- Valid reason for termination of the lease by landlords and an end to 'no-cause' evictions.
- The establishment of an independent Residential Tenancies Bond Board.
- Protections against discrimination in the rental market.

3. Prevent the loss of 770 affordable National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties.

Australia will soon have a National Housing and Homelessness Plan which will create a pathway to begin to address the huge deficit of unmet housing need. Encouragingly, the Northern Territory will also see an increase in social and affordable housing via Commonwealth housing investment. It will not be enough to provide all Territorians to appropriate and affordable housing, but it is a start. In the meantime, the Northern Territory stands to see a loss of 770 NRAS allocations, a significant portion of which are held by the Northern Territory Government.

As highlighted in our Pre-Budget Submission to the Northern Territory Government last year<sup>xiii</sup> and the year prior,<sup>xiv</sup> the loss of these entitlements will create tremendous challenges for many Territory families in an environment where the cost of living is high, vacancy rates are low and market rents are soaring. If not replaced, the loss of these entitlements will result in rents rising to market levels, becoming unaffordable to those on lower incomes, and resulting in further poverty and homelessness.

While we wait for new social and affordable housing, we can't afford to let those who are already housed fall into homelessness. Interim measures must be put in place until new housing supply comes online.

The Northern Territory Government, in the absence of a viable replacement scheme that is funded by the Commonwealth, must ensure these remaining 770 NRAS properties remain affordable i.e. available to rent and below market rents. There are different ways of doing this:

- (i) Purchase some of these NRAS properties from current owners (as the Queensland Government has done) and continue to rent them at a discount to market rent.
- (ii) Underwrite the current quantum of NRAS subsidy for those dwellings with subsidies attached until such time as they are replaced by new housing supply coming online from the Housing Accord.

#### Case study, Queensland:

To avoid the loss of affordable dwellings, the Queensland Government has, this year, announced plans to purchase a portion (456) of the 4,841 homes remaining in Queensland as part of NRAS.

In a recent announcement, the Palaszczuk Government's plans are well underway with a commitment to partner with community Housing Provider, Coast2Bay to buy up to 121 homes across regional Queensland.

The Government has said that the purchase of existing stock makes sense as a path to increase the number of properties available to people in need, quickly.

More information [available here](#).

#### 4. Increase investment in tenancy support programs.

There is a substantial and growing body of evidence that quantifies the costs of homelessness across a range of domains. People experiencing homelessness are often heavy users of non-homeless services like the health, justice and welfare systems. The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) reported that in 2010 dollars the average annual costs to these three sectors to support a person experiencing homelessness was \$25,343.<sup>xv</sup> The cost of a person with stable housing on these same sectors was \$2,588.<sup>xvi</sup> AHURI also noted that the cost of supporting a homeless person in accommodation was \$4,890.<sup>xvii</sup>

It makes good economic sense to invest in preventative strategies and programs to support the establishment of sustainable new tenancies and to save those tenancies that are at risk. This is particularly important in the Northern Territory where new tenancies are often established for tenants who have limited experience living in a mainstream tenancy.

A recent review of tenancy support programs found that these programs play a critical role in supporting tenants and their families to maintain stable housing and prevent them from becoming homeless. This work, however, is done under challenging conditions including limited resourcing.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition, the 2021 Homelessness Data and Service Usage Analysis published by TFHC, states that tenancy support programs were the most successful service style at assisting clients to maintain their tenancies.

Based on the information available to NT Shelter, organisations offering tenancy support and transitional housing programs indicates an average staff to client ratio of 1:16, a waitlist of 100 applicants and a wait time of up to 24 months. Despite this long waitlist, over 33 new referrals are received each month on average. One NT Shelter member organisation indicated that an estimated 28% of tenants are in rental arrears and 19% are exhibiting anti-social behaviours that are placing their tenancies at risk. There is a high demand for tenancy support programs, including transitional housing, but a severe lack of capacity for agencies to adequately service this demand. This leads to failed tenancies.

Government has an opportunity to work in partnership with NT Shelter member organisations to jointly design, finance and implement programs that focus on the establishment and maintenance of sustainable tenancies.

To prevent people exiting tenancies into homelessness and adversely impacting family services, the corrections system, domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) programs, health services and the wider community, the Northern Territory Government invest in homelessness prevention via increased funding for tenancy support programs. **Estimated cost = \$1,500,000 p.a.**

5. Through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, undertake a pilot program making available Business Development Advisor/s to the SHS sector to overcome barriers to successfully securing finance.

Finding time for strategic tasks and thinking when leading an under-resourced and oversubscribed service is challenging. Positioning an organisation to capitalise on new opportunities and resources, when available, takes time and capacity to consider, not just about the immediate, but *what could be*.

Identifying and securing new sources of funding, particularly federal and philanthropic funding, is particularly challenging for small organisations with access to fewer human and financial resources. Investing thousands of dollars in developing a grant proposal without the guarantee of success rules out many Northern Territory SHS agencies. They simply cannot afford the risk.

Interstate, philanthropy plays an important role in supporting not-for-profit organisations to achieve outcomes that benefit the wider community. However, developing associations with philanthropic organisations again requires time and financial capacity that many Northern Territory SHS providers do not have.

The Northern Territory homelessness sector is underfunded, overstretched and often not in the financial position to self-fund projects that will support people experiencing homelessness. New finance streams are needed to achieve these projects. The capacity of the SHS sector must be built to better position it to take advantage of the funding opportunities available. The Northern Territory Government supports businesses to access interstate and overseas export markets. This positions the Northern Territory well, reaping substantial reward from modest investment by attracting business and funding that might otherwise not have occurred. NT Shelter encourages the Northern Territory Government to similarly invest in not-for-profit organisations so that these organisations can, in turn, attract external financing to close the gap on homelessness and Indigenous housing disadvantage.

The not-for-profit sector is more valuable to the Northern Territory than mining and employs more than twice as many people.<sup>xix</sup> In 2020, over 10,000 people were employed by Northern Territory charities and a further 11,208 volunteers were engaged, feeding over \$615 million back into the Northern Territory economy via employee remuneration.<sup>xx</sup> Charities operating in the Northern Territory have a total annual income of \$1.3 billion.<sup>xxi</sup> Investment in the Northern Territory SHS sector is beneficial to the recipient, their clients/tenants, the NT Government and the wider economy.

NT Shelter proposes that the Northern Territory Government, through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, undertake a pilot program making available Business Development Advisor/s to the sector. The Advisor/s focus would be on identifying financing opportunities for the SHS sector, matching sector organisations to the opportunities available and working with sector organisations to overcome barriers to successfully securing finance. **Estimated cost = \$200,000 p.a.**

## 6. Undertake a feasibility study for a Youth Foyer in Alice Springs.

Young people are disproportionately represented in the Northern Territory's homeless population. Despite representing less than 17% of the population, people aged 12-24 represent a quarter of the Territory's homeless population.<sup>xxii</sup> If we consider children under 12 also, almost 50% of the Northern Territory's homelessness population is under the age of 25.<sup>xxiii</sup> The majority of youth homelessness in the Northern Territory is due to severe crowding.<sup>xxiv</sup> Young people living in severely crowded dwellings represent 87% of homeless young people.<sup>xxv</sup>

On any given day in the Northern Territory, SHS support 320 clients aged 15-24 presenting alone and 720 children in families.<sup>xxvi</sup> Between June 2021 and June 2022, the rate of young people presenting alone to SHS in the NT was almost four times the national average and whilst nationally the rate has decreased overall in the eight years to 2022, the rate has risen by 56% in the Northern Territory.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In 2023, NT Shelter and the Office of the Children's Commissioner NT published a report on the experiences of young people in Alice Springs. When asked what would help the young people of the town exit from homelessness, 45.7% of respondents identified the need for housing and accommodation-related supports. The majority specifically identified youth-specific accommodation.<sup>xxviii</sup>

We know that youth-specific accommodation is central to decreasing youth homelessness and the Youth Foyer model is one that has proven successful as a model for at-risk or homeless young people in every other Australian jurisdiction and overseas. 80% of Foyer participants exit into stable housing with 72% exiting into private housing.<sup>xxix</sup> Young people engaged in a Foyer program are 1.6 times more likely to achieve a higher level of education than if engaged with an SHS.<sup>xxx</sup> 65% of Foyer participants gain employment.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The lifetime cost to the government of supporting a young person that has accessed an SHS is estimated at \$386,000.<sup>xxxii</sup> 48% of this cost is incurred by the Australian Government and 52% by state and territory governments.<sup>xxxiii</sup> On a per person basis, Foyers create an average of \$84,000 in benefits for the Australian Government across taxation uplifts, welfare, housing and federal health savings.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Foyers also create \$89,000 in benefits for state and territory governments through the avoided social housing, state health, and justice costs.<sup>xxxv</sup> Put simply, for every \$1 spent on Foyers, the model generates an additional \$6 in value for governments.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The evidence is clear and supported by the young people of Alice Springs who have identified the need for youth-specific accommodation. The housing and homelessness sector in the town have also identified the establishment of a Youth Foyer as a regional priority. Further, the Northern Territory Government has identified a Youth Foyer proposal in the Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Federally, a Youth Foyer was identified by the Federal Opposition as a priority for Alice Springs in 2019 when \$10 million was promised by Federal Labor.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Despite broad recognition that a Foyer is needed, the Northern Territory Government has yet to commit to its establishment. Foyers are recognised globally as a pathway out of homelessness and service system dependence, yet the Northern Territory remains the only jurisdiction without one.



It is time for the Northern Territory Government to hear what the evidence, the young people of Alice Springs and the sector are crying out for and invest in a feasibility study for a Youth Foyer in Alice Springs. **Estimated cost = \$500,000.**



Young people (12-14) experiencing homelessness in Alice Springs make up **20%** of the town's homeless population.<sup>xxxix</sup>



Only **one** SHS-funded service provides accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness in Alice Springs.



The average cost of establishing a Youth Foyer is \$15 million. They can be purpose-built or use existing structures.



The ongoing operational cost of running a Foyer is approximately \$1.6-\$2 million per annum for a 40-bed facility.



*I reckon we need accommodation, nurse in one building. I feel like we need a youth centre with accommodation all in one, all services in one. That would be a good way to stop the homelessness, to re-engage kids in school, in activities, to get them check-ups, you could have like a nurse, a counsellor, all services in one.*

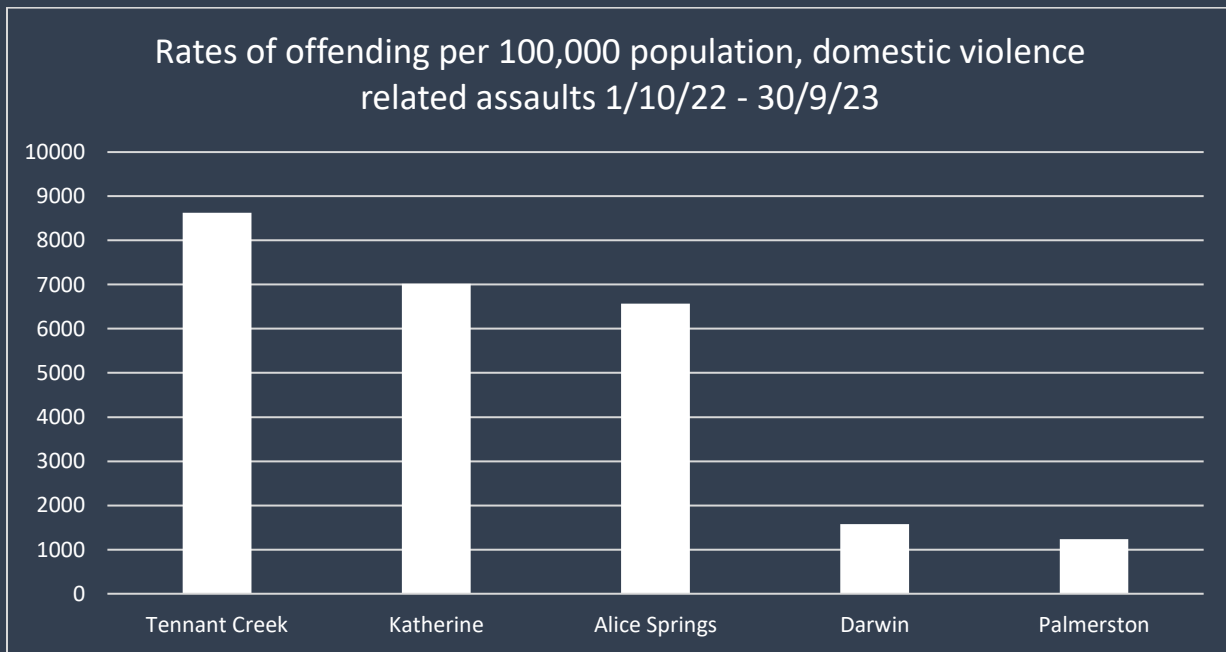
*-Cora, 24.*

7. Fund a feasibility study exploring options for transitional accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence (DFV) in Tennant Creek.

Domestic and family violence (DFV) and access to safe and affordable housing are inextricably linked. Inadequate housing is widely understood to be a risk factor for DFV<sup>xi</sup> and DFV is the top reason that people, predominantly women, leave their homes in Australia.<sup>xii</sup> Overcrowded and poorly maintained housing exacerbates violence, making women and children more vulnerable to abuse from a range of potential abusers.<sup>xiii</sup> Inadequate housing is also a contributing factor to violent relationships; if women need stable housing, particularly if they need housing to maintain custody of a child, they are more likely to return to a perpetrator.<sup>xiii</sup>

In the 2022-23 reporting period, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that DFV was the top reason clients sought assistance from specialist homelessness services.<sup>xiv</sup> In the Northern Territory, this client cohort is 56% and increasing, compared to 36% nationally.<sup>xiv</sup> The Northern Territory has the highest rates of DFV-related assault, sexual assault and DFV-related homicide in Australia, noting that reported data is likely to under-estimate prevalence rates.<sup>xvi</sup> These rates are increasing year-on-year.<sup>xvii</sup> Aboriginal women are the majority of victim survivors.<sup>xviii</sup> The highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence are seen in Tennant Creek.<sup>xlix</sup>

Figure 1:1



It is an indictment on the current state of our housing system that we frequently hear reports from services that support women experiencing DFV that their clients are forced to return to violent situations to avoid homelessness. In Tennant Creek, it is not uncommon for support workers to be asked the question, *'how do I leave him when I have nowhere to go?'*

Services report that they often utilise emergency relief funds to support women and children into hotels, however these options are frequently unavailable (at capacity), unsuitable to the needs of the client, or reluctant to accept the client, citing bans that are put in place due to destructive or intimidating past behaviours by perpetrators.

A critical gap in the Northern Territory housing system is the lack of transitional housing for women and children who are fleeing DFV. For women who are exiting from domestic and family violence crisis shelters or women who are not at imminent threat, there are few if any viable accommodation options in the Territory's regional centres of Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs.

In Tennant Creek, stakeholders have identified the urgent need for transitional housing to support women and children leaving violent homes. Despite the level of DFV in the Barkly, which on a per capita basis has the highest rate of recorded DFV-related assaults (almost three times the NT rate) and sexual assault offenses (2.6 times the NT rate),<sup>1</sup> none of the 28 initiatives included in the Barkly Regional Deal are specifically for women and children impacted by DFV. Currently, the lack of transitional accommodation in the town leads to at-risk women and children cycling in and out of crisis accommodation.

Data for 2022-23 provided by the Tennant Creek Women's Refuge (TCWR), shows that 81.9% of clients over this period were seeking assistance due to direct DFV and many are faced with a constant cycle of trauma and violence with limited accommodation options to offer a way out. For women with disability or those with access requirements, the only crisis accommodation, the TCWR, may not be an option given limited accessibility. This poses additional barriers to the safety of this cohort.

The Tennant Creek rental market does not offer a viable option to these women and is characterised by stakeholders as exclusionary and limited. Therefore, programs that rely on the head leasing of dwellings from the private market, like the Housing Pathways Program, are unlikely to have success in Tennant Creek. Stakeholders recommend a congregate living environment where women can access each other and services for support but find their own private space.

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As a starting point, NT Shelter recommends that the Northern Territory Government fund a feasibility study to urgently explore options for transitional housing for women and children escaping DFV in Tennant Creek with consideration of the local context and best practice in the Northern Territory and further afield. **Estimated cost = \$500,000.**



8. Fund a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to access financing opportunities to establish short stay visitor accommodation in Katherine.

Short stay visitor accommodation in Katherine has been a top priority and budget ask from NT Shelter for several years. We were pleased to see the Northern Territory Government's commitment in 2022 to undertake a feasibility study for a short-stay accommodation facility. However, little progress has been made and visitors coming to Katherine to access essential services are still waiting for signs that suitable short-stay accommodation will be provided any time soon.

Upon completion of the Tennant Creek Visitor Park, Katherine will be the only urban centre in the Northern Territory without visitor accommodation. The people of the Big Rivers region need a safe place to stay when coming to Katherine for family, medical, cultural, educational, sporting or other reasons.

Having a safe place where visitors can sleep with dignity, protection and comfort is the right of any Territorian and is a significant key infrastructure gap in Katherine, an urban centre that services the Northern Territory's second largest region, home to roughly 21,000 people.<sup>ii</sup>

To get this important initiative moving, NT Shelter proposes that the Northern Territory Government commit funding to a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, in order to build internal capacity to access various financing opportunities on offer through the Federal Government.

**Estimated cost = \$100,000.**

We would, of course, expect the Northern Territory Government to be an important joint stakeholder in respect of either a capital contribution and/or ongoing operational costs of the project. The Northern Territory Government must continue to have an ongoing leadership and coordination role in order to see the initiative come to fruition.

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