



## Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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BAC-CO-51363  
COR 2019 006509

Ms Kate Sanderson  
Coroner's Registrar  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

VIA EMAIL: [cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au](mailto:cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ms Sanderson

### **Investigation into the death of Ms Bekkie-Rae Curren - COR 2019 006509**

Thank you for your letter of 16 October 2024 addressed to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including State Coroner Judge John Cain's findings regarding the death of Ms Bekkie-Rae Curren.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) is responding to recommendations b, c, d and e on behalf of the Victorian Government.

All initiatives outlined in this response are fully funded by the Victorian Government.

The department's response to the Coroner's recommendations are as follows:

***Recommendation b: That the Victorian Government implement the outstanding recommendations outlined by the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria and commit to investing in the establishment of adequate crisis accommodation to meet projected demand for victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence who leave or are removed from their home.***

The Coroner's recommendation is being implemented.

*That the Victorian Government implement the outstanding recommendations outlined by the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria*

The Victorian Government supports in full, the outstanding recommendations of the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Homelessness (Homelessness Inquiry) in Victoria: recommendations 9, 10, and 35. There is currently no timeframe for full implementation, however the following related work and activities are underway.

*Homelessness Inquiry Recommendation 9:* That the Victorian Government provide ongoing funding for the family violence Flexible Support Packages program:

- Specialist family violence services receive Family Violence Flexible Support Packages funding to deliver personalised and holistic responses to assist adult and child victim survivors experiencing family violence in their longer-term recovery.

- Individualised packages provide flexible brokerage to victim survivors to purchase a range of tailored and practical supports based on their support plans, including counselling, wellbeing, education, employment, financial counselling, transport, housing stability, financial security, and other practical or material needs.
- Twenty-three specialist family violence agencies are funded to provide Flexible Support Packages through a mix of fixed term and ongoing funding across Victoria.

*Homelessness Inquiry Recommendation 10:* That the Victorian Government fund research into the incidence of homelessness amongst perpetrators of family violence in Victoria, increase funding for family violence programs that focus on perpetrator interventions, and trial and evaluate the effectiveness of programs that provide supported accommodation for perpetrators of family violence, linked to compulsory behavioural change programs, including in regional areas.

- The department has funded two trials of supported accommodation for perpetrators of family violence, both of which have been evaluated and embedded as ongoing services:
  - under the Men's Accommodation and Counselling Service (MACS), short-term crisis accommodation is available for people who have been excluded from the family home due to family violence and who agree to participate in family violence counselling. MACS provides motel-type accommodation and is available across the State.
  - medium-term accommodation is also available in five areas across the State for people who have used family violence and who remain engaged with the specialist family violence system. This program is called Place for Change and involves partnerships between specialist family violence service providers and housing providers. Two of these partnerships involve Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

*Homelessness Inquiry Recommendation 35:* That the Victorian Government improve access to specialist family violence crisis accommodation facilities, including by conducting demand modelling for family violence crisis accommodation across the state to ascertain need, providing additional funding for accommodation facilities, and ensuring regional areas have access to family violence accommodation to allow persons experiencing violence to remain in or close to their communities.

- The Victorian Government is working to improve access to specialist family violence crisis accommodation facilities, including through improving data capture related to demand for crisis accommodation.
- Specialist family violence services have been operating under the Family Violence Crisis Response Model since August 2023, and frequently work with homelessness services at the local level. This model improves the way the family violence system works to support victim survivors in crisis, including in regional areas. In particular, it offers an enhanced model of outreach to victim survivors while they are in emergency accommodation. Agencies are required to coordinate their responses to manage victim survivors' risk when moving between accommodation options and ensure that victim survivors experience minimal disruptions, relocations or handover between agencies. The model aims to ensure:

- all victim survivors in crisis get immediate support and emergency accommodation no matter which specialist family violence service they access
- all victim survivors in emergency accommodation can access face-to-face support from a local family violence support service, wherever they are accommodated and at any time of day or night; and
- all victim survivors will be supported by, or connected to, a local family violence support service when leaving emergency accommodation.
- Victim survivors in crisis can contact The Orange Door during business hours, or the 24/7 statewide crisis service Safe Steps to access immediate specialist family violence support, including emergency accommodation where required.

*Investing in the establishment of adequate crisis accommodation to meet projected demand for victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence who leave or are removed from their home.*

- The Victorian Government has committed over \$250 million since the Family Violence Royal Commission made its recommendations in 2016 to improve and expand refuge and crisis accommodation responses in Victoria. This includes:
  - funding to construct 17 new core and cluster refuges to replace ageing government owned communal refuges, and five additional core and cluster refuge builds, increasing total household capacity from 124 to 197 per night once all sites are completed
  - funding to purchase six Crisis Accommodation Program properties in areas of high demand to provide additional step-down options for victim survivors from refuge accommodation
  - partnerships with refuge agencies to upgrade and operate three agency owned properties and infrastructure, delivering additional supported accommodation options for victim survivors; and
  - funding for Safe Steps' Sanctuary model which provides 7 units of supported crisis accommodation for victim survivors, enhancing responses for women and children who would otherwise be placed in motels.
- Additional investments to increase the supply of crisis accommodation for victim survivors of family violence under the Housing portfolio include:
  - \$134 million in the 2023-24 State Budget for homelessness and housing support; and
  - \$196.9 million over four years in the 2024-25 State Budget to break the cycle of homelessness. This includes targeted investment to meet critical demand for services providing support and accommodation to women experiencing homelessness.
- The Women's Safety Package announced in May 2024 is providing additional funding to keep Victim Survivors safe in their homes. The package includes a three-year boost in funding to the Personal Safety Initiative to ensure access to equipment such as personal duress alarms for victim survivors which makes staying at home safer. The package will also support a three-year trial of a Safe at Home program designed

with input from women who have lived experience of family violence and homelessness.

***Recommendation c: That the Victorian Government implement the recommendations outlined by the Inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria, with special consideration to building 60,000 new public housing dwellings by 2034, in line with projected demands.***

An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation is being implemented:

- The Victorian Government supports in-principle recommendation 30 of the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis in Victoria, that '*the Victorian Government commit to building 60,000 new social housing dwellings by 2034, with 40,000 completed by 2028*'.
- The Victorian Government is committed to delivering on our current investment programs including the \$6.3 billion Big Housing Build and Regional Housing Fund. Up to 1,000 homes will support victim survivors of family violence.
- Victoria's Housing Statement includes a continued focus and investment in building more social and affordable homes across Victoria. Key actions and investment include:
  - launching Australia's biggest ever urban renewal project by retiring and redeveloping all of Melbourne's 44 ageing high-rise public housing estates by 2051.
  - building up to 769 new social housing homes over the next five years with funding from the Commonwealth Government's Social Housing Accelerator.
  - investment of \$1 billion in Affordable Housing Investment Partnerships providing low interest loans and government guarantees to finance social and affordable housing.
- The Victorian Government will continue to explore investment options and delivery models for increasing supply, in alignment with government policy objectives and budget processes that achieve value for money outcomes.

***Recommendation d: That the Victorian Government consider alternative ways of expanding social housing stock in Victoria, such as exploring incentives for landlords to lease their properties at affordable rates.***

The Coroner's recommendation is being implemented.

- The Victorian Government is currently implementing a range of initiatives based on alternative delivery methods for social and affordable housing.
- The department is committed to exploring innovative construction methods that will deliver more housing for vulnerable Victorians. Part of the Regional Housing Fund will be delivered using streamlined delivery model for the modern methods of construction program with a focus on template designs for residential dwellings in low to medium density, high volume social and affordable housing in a range of sizes.
- The department is also actively exploring the construction of small secondary dwellings on suitable properties while refurbishing the existing dwelling.

- The Victorian Government is exploring long-term head leasing of unsold apartments within developments at social housing rental rates to support families who need social and affordable housing.
- Victoria is working closely with the Commonwealth to develop further social and affordable housing for the state:
  - Housing Australia announced it will deliver more than 13,700 social and affordable housing homes from an initial pipeline of 185 projects through the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) and National Housing Accord programs. Victoria is expected to receive 4,135 of these homes, the largest allocation for any state and territory, and representing 30 per cent of the Australian total. In addition to this, Victoria has been allocated 1275 dwellings in HAFF Round 2.
  - the Commonwealth recently repurposed \$1 billion from the NHIF towards crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence, and for youth. Victoria will receive up to \$248.8 million funding.

***Recommendation e: That the Victorian Government consider reserving a portion of public housing stock for perpetrators of family violence who have been removed from the family home, with the aim of increasing the safety of women and children.***

An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

- Several initiatives exist that contribute towards the intent of recommendation e, providing support to perpetrators with the aim of reducing repeat offending thereby increasing the safety of women and children.
- In addition to MACS and Medium-term accommodation (detailed above), case management is available for persons using family violence service across the State. Providers delivering case management are also funded for crisis brokerage, which can be used to support and assist men as they secure private accommodation. Providers delivering case management and crisis brokerage include Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for social housing are placed on the Victorian Housing Register according to their housing need. Perpetrators may be eligible for priority access into social housing if they meet the eligibility criteria.

I hope this information satisfies the Coroner's recommendations in relation to this matter. If you require further information, please contact Alix Rhodes, Executive Director Strategy, Policy and Planning, Homes Victoria [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



**Melanie Heenan**  
Acting Secretary

10/01/2025