



**SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT TASMANIAN WOMEN'S STRATEGY  
SHELTER TAS, APRIL 2022**



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Shelter Tas is supported by the Department of Communities Tasmania.



Shelter Tasmania acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Tasmania and their continuing connection to the land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past and present.



Shelter Tas welcomes and supports people of diverse genders and sexual orientations.

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29 April 2022

**Shelter Tasmania Submission to the Draft *Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27***

**Recommendation: Shelter Tas recommends a specific housing strategy for women within the *Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27***

Shelter Tas is Tasmania's peak body for housing and homelessness services. Our members include all the Women's Shelters, Specialist Homelessness Services and Community Housing Providers in Tasmania. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the final stage of the development of the *Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27* (the *Strategy*), noting that we provided a substantial submission in November 2021, arguing that a specific housing strategy for women is essential for achieving the goals of the *Strategy*. While the *Strategy* notes that "affordable, secure and accessible housing positively impacts a person's economic security, options to participate fully in all aspects of life, safety and health and wellbeing" (page 16) there is no commitment to a strategy for women's housing.

We are pleased to see that the *Strategy* includes a gender impact assessment process for Government

A key initiative under the *Strategy* will be a gender impact assessment for Government. A Gender Impact Assessment is used in the design and implementation of policies, programs and services to examine the impact they have on men, women and gender diverse people.

However, the gender impact assessment does not seem to be applied to housing. The *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* (currently in development) and the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy (2015-25)* are not mentioned in the *Strategy's* Appendix "Whole of Government Initiatives" (p 22). The *Strategy* does not deal directly with housing for women, and it does not address the disproportionate barriers faced by women and their children in Tasmania's tight and competitive housing market. In particular, women on low and moderate incomes, and women with children who are renters face significant disadvantage in obtaining affordable, safe, secure and appropriate homes.

Women who are affected by family and domestic violence are at heightened risk in Tasmania's tight and expensive housing market.<sup>1</sup> Without a secure home, women are less likely to leave family and domestic violence situations, return to the workforce or attend to serious medical conditions. They are also more likely to 'use' correctional services, be in poor mental health and have little income left over to spend on other essential goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

There is clear evidence that a dedicated approach to women's housing is needed to ensure that the *Strategy's* goals can be achieved.

In Tasmania

- More women than men seek assistance from Tasmania's homelessness services - 56% of all requests
- Being vulnerable to housing stress and homelessness is a result of income and the cost of housing, and women have lower incomes
- More women than men live in poverty at all ages, especially during older age. There are **20 per cent of all women living in poverty compared to 17 per cent of men.** Women spend more years living in poverty compared to men
- Family violence is the major reason that women and children seek assistance from homelessness services
- Some women have lived secure lives with employment and good housing until relationship breakdown, illness or other life shocks leave them in hardship and unable to continue to pay their rent or mortgage
- More Tasmanian women than ever are forced to couch surf, live in their cars or make do in hostels, many of them survivors of family violence or divorcees suffering severe financial hardship
- One of Tasmania's largest women's shelters is forced to turn away twice as many women and children as they can accommodate, because they are too full to fit them in.

We know from national data that

- Across Australia older women are officially the fastest-growing demographic at risk of homelessness. From 2011–2016 the Census revealed a 31 per cent jump in the number of Australian women aged 55 and over who were displaced. (In Victoria the jump was 67 per cent and in NSW it was 48 per cent.)
- Family and domestic violence is the primary reason women and children seek specialist homelessness services, but only 3.2% are currently receiving the long-term housing solutions they need.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://everybodyshome.com.au/report-social-housing-keeps-women-safe-from-family-violence-expands-economy/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CHIA-2022-Federal-Election-Platform-web.pdf?x69595>

Shelter Tas has consistently called for

- Secure and sufficient funding for women’s shelters across the state
- A *Women’s Housing Strategy* –we have called for this since 2017 and it has yet to be included in either the *Tasmanian Women’s Strategy* or the *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy*
- Ensuring that new initiatives such as expanded shared equity schemes are designed to work for older women who have lower income and assets
- A 10% level of social housing to meet the needs of all vulnerable Tasmanians including women and children.

In Shelter Tas’ 2021 submission to the *Tasmanian Women’s Strategy*, we called for a specific housing strategy for women within the *Strategy*.<sup>3</sup>

In our 2022-23 Submission to the Tasmanian Budget Process, we recommended

**A specific housing strategy for women, and dedicated funds within the implementation of the Tasmanian Women’s Strategy, the Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy and Tasmanian Housing Strategy to deliver specialised housing that meets the particular needs of women, including specialist family violence shelters.<sup>4</sup> (Recommendation 3)**

The increased costs of housing (purchase and rent) in Tasmania have disproportionate impacts on women, because of their lower incomes. These impacts include more women seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services. Last year, data from Tasmania’s system of Specialist Homelessness Services shows there were 5 279 unassisted requests from men, and 13 934 unassisted requests from women – more than twice as many. The current *Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy* and the proposed *Tasmanian Housing Strategy* currently under development has not yet committed to a dedicated strategic focus on issues around women and housing availability, cost, safety and security.

It is very positive that the *Strategy* includes a commitment to

#### **Increasing women’s participation in the building and construction sector**

We have committed \$100,000 to the development of a Women in Building and Construction Strategy and a Girls in Property Pilot program with the Property Council of Tasmania. This funding recognises that ongoing effort is required to create pathways for girls and young women, and support women’s participation in sectors critical to Tasmania’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://shelertas.org.au/shelter-tas-submission-to-the-tasmanian-womens-strategy-2022-25/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://shelertas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Shelter-Tas-Budget-Submission-2022-23.pdf>

However, it may be impossible for women without a home, living in unsafe or unaffordable situations, or at risk of homelessness to take up these opportunities.

Shelter Tas supports the *Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27*. We note that **health and wellbeing** is one of the four priority outcome areas. However, having safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing is essential for health and well being. A focus on housing is essential for success in this outcome area. Having a home is essential for women to have a fair and equitable opportunity to participate in society. The *Tasmanian Women's Strategy* needs to include housing.

Shelter Tas would welcome an opportunity to discuss issues for women in Tasmania facing housing hardship and homelessness, and to explore how housing can be included in the *Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27*.

Pattie Chugg  
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### **About Shelter Tas**

Shelter Tas is an independent not-for-profit peak organisation representing the interests of low to moderate income housing consumers, community housing providers and Specialist Homelessness Services across Tasmania. We provide an expert voice on housing rights and a link between the Tasmanian government and the community through consultation, research and policy advice. We work towards a fairer and more just housing system. Our vision is affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing for all Tasmanians and an end to homelessness. Shelter Tas is a member of National Shelter, and represents the Community Industry Housing Association (CHIA) in Tasmania.

For more information see [www.shelertas.org.au](http://www.shelertas.org.au)