

**Submission  
No 37**

## **OPTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKER HOUSING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Domestic Violence NSW

**Date Received:** 12 September 2024

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Mr Alex Greenwich, MP, Chair, IND  
Mrs Sally Quinnell, MP, Deputy Chair, ALP  
Mr Stephen Bali, MP, ALP  
Ms Liza Butler, MP, ALP  
Mr James Griffin, MP, LIB

Dear members of the Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing,

**Re: Inquiry into Essential Worker Housing in NSW**

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) welcomes this opportunity to provide a written submission on behalf of the 188-specialist domestic and family violence (DFV) services we represent across NSW.

We commend the NSW Government for taking action to address the lack of affordable and available housing for essential workers across the state.

**DVNSW recommends:**

- 1. Domestic and family violence workers be classified as essential workers in the NSW Essential Worker Housing program.**
- 2. Special consideration be given to domestic and family violence workers in regional, rural and remote areas. Prioritise essential worker housing in the regions based on need, by identifying and prioritising areas where there is both a lack of housing availability and high rates of DFV.**

This submission responds to part (a) of the Terms of Reference:

(a) Establishing an appropriate definition for essential worker housing for the NSW Government to adopt including criteria for prioritising worker cohorts and geographical areas.

In establishing an essential worker definition, we must consider which criteria should be prioritised for particular worker cohorts. Essential workers should be uniquely and highly skilled to undertake essential and potentially life-saving work. DFV workers are a specialist workforce who provide essential support to victim-survivors (mainly women and children) who have experienced DFV. Victim-survivors rely on the DFV workforce to provide a range of tailored and often crucial and in many cases life-saving support including safety planning and assessment, crisis accommodation, counselling and therapeutic services, case management, support navigating the legal system, and information and referrals to other services.

Rates of DFV are increasing across the state at an alarming rate of 3 percent every year in the five years to 2022 (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2022, Domestic & Family Violence in NSW, 2018-2022). There are a range of issues that impact the attraction and retention of skilled and experienced DFV workers. Lack of affordable housing for workers alongside low pay rates, act as a disincentive to join or remain in the sector. Specialist DFV services are facing a significant workforce shortage and many of the current workforce are due for retirement. DFV workers must be classified as essential in the NSW Essential Worker Housing program to prioritise access to affordable housing for DFV workers, mitigate recruitment



and retention issues and ensure a sustainable workforce that can provide victim-survivors with support to live safely and free from violence.

The housing shortage is felt more acutely in regional and rural areas therefore special consideration should be given to DFV workers in regional, rural and remote areas. We recommend prioritising essential worker housing in the regions based on need, by identifying and prioritising areas where there is both a lack of housing availability and high rates of DFV.

## **About us**

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence (DFV) services in NSW. With approximately 190 member organisations across the state and diverse lived expertise advisory groups, we work to improve policy, legislative and program responses to domestic and family violence through advocacy and collaboration, while promoting good practice and primary prevention.

We exist to eliminate domestic and family violence from society.

DVNSW members represent the diversity of NSW specialist DFV services, working to support adults, children, families and communities impacted by domestic and family violence. Our member organisations consist of services such as crisis and refuge specialist homelessness services, domestic violence response enhancement, specialist DFV case management, Aboriginal controlled organisations, migrant and refugee specialist organisations, community housing, staying home leaving violence, women's legal and women's court advocacy services, men's behaviour change programs, and general community, women and children's support programs. It's our role to ensure our members are listened to, respected and heard by the change-makers in society.

We recognise that lived experience is central to change. We understand that DFV impacts some communities disproportionately – which is why we ensure the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, migrant and refugee people and people with disability have a central voice in our advocacy. With guidance from lived experts, we elevate the experiences, voices and needs of victim-survivors through all work we undertake.

Together with victim-survivors, our members, our partners and our team – we will end gender-based violence in NSW.

Sincerely,



Delia Donovan

CEO

Domestic Violence NSW