

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Election Statement

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand is calling for all parties and candidates standing in the 2022 Victorian election to commit to providing solutions for women and families experiencing and recovering from financial hardship and family violence.

The increasing cost-of-living places significant financial stress on many Victorian households. This is compounded by the ongoing recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more frequent and intense climate change disasters such as floods, which have affected many Victorians.

As a major family violence services provider, Good Shepherd is acutely aware of the added dangers for women who cannot access local, safe, and timely service responses, and who are not appropriately supported to be financially secure and recover from violence.

Put simply, a lack of money and safe housing forces women to stay with abusive partners. At least 1 in 4 women who want to leave a violent current partner are unable to do so because they do not have enough money or financial support.

Good Shepherd is calling for the future Victorian Government to address the exacerbation of existing economic inequities caused by the rising cost-of-living, by ensuring women and families receive extra assistance to build financial wellbeing and resilience in the years ahead.

Improve housing outcomes for women and children experiencing family violence

Housing is fundamental to preventing and disrupting family violence. [Across Australia](#), **7,690 women a year¹** return to perpetrators because they have nowhere affordable to live, and **9,120 become homeless²** after leaving due to family violence. A lack of affordable, stable housing is one of the biggest barriers faced by Good Shepherd practitioners working with victim-survivors.

Concrete commitments are needed from the future Victorian Government to increase the availability of **affordable, sustainable housing for women and children** leaving abusive relationships, particularly crisis, social and private rental housing.

This includes expanding Victorian Government social housing investments to cope with the growing wave of vulnerably housed women by building at least **6000 new social housing properties each year over the next 10 years**, and prioritising housing for victim-survivors as part of this commitment.

Ensure those in the greatest need receive relief from high energy prices

Energy prices have increased significantly in the last 12 months and are [expected to rise](#) by 50 per cent nationally by 2023–24. Inflationary pressures mean take-home pay is not increasing, but families are expected to pay more for utilities and other essential items.

The future Victorian Government should prioritise targeted relief for women and children in vulnerable circumstances, including:

- Provide **extra energy debt relief** to families with severe income constraints, on top of any extended Power Saving Bonus
- Mandate free, accessible **payment splitting entitlements and payment difficulty support** for all essential & important services
- Standardise and improve **family violence support** for all essential & important services, including removing the burden on victims-survivors to provide proof of family violence

Address the specific needs of women and children escaping family violence in disaster recovery

The recent floods across the east coast of Australia have devastated communities, the environment, and infrastructure and are taking a toll on the mental and physical health of many Victorians.

The future Victorian Government should focus on building supportive, trauma-informed disaster recovery services including:

1. Fund **sustained recovery programs** that recognise the long tail of financial, safety and mental health impacts for women and families
2. Provide **tailored family violence services** that understand the needs of women and families traumatised by disaster
3. **Facilitate community-led disaster support**, grounded in the knowledge and needs of local communities

Good Shepherd looks forward to working with the future Victorian Government to help implement our recommendations and ensure Victoria remains focused on ending violence against women and children and building their financial wellbeing.

1 – Equity Economics ‘Nowhere to Go’ report: <https://www.equityeconomics.com.au/report-archive/nowhere-to-go-the-benefits-of-providing-long-term-social-housing-to-women-that-have-experienced-domestic-and-family-violence>

2 – Equity Economics ‘Nowhere to Go’ report: <https://www.equityeconomics.com.au/report-archive/nowhere-to-go-the-benefits-of-providing-long-term-social-housing-to-women-that-have-experienced-domestic-and-family-violence>