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Victorian Government's social housing spend a step towards a stronger state

The Victorian Government's \$5.3 billion investment into social and affordable housing, announced ahead of next week's Victorian State Budget 2020/21, will improve the lives of thousands of vulnerable Victorians and ultimately ensure the state is stronger and more cohesive, says Jesuit Social Services.

"We commend the Victorian Government on this unprecedented funding announcement, which will support the construction of 9,300 new social housing units and 2,900 new affordable homes to support low to moderate income earners," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

The package will increase Victoria's social housing supply by 10 per cent in the next four years.

"Fundamentally, these projects will ensure that thousands of Victorians have a safe and secure place to call home. Crucially, this funding will also help support our construction industry and provide jobs which will provide critical support to Victoria's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Jesuit Social Services works with many vulnerable people – including people with mental health and substance abuse problems, newly-arrived refugees, people exiting prison and people leaving out-of-home-care services – who rely on public or community housing," says Ms Edwards.

"We see the impact that insecure, unstable or unsafe housing can have on a person's ability to lead a healthy, fulfilling and productive life, particularly for people who already experience complex forms of disadvantage. Adequate housing is a fundamental human right and this investment means more Victorians will have a place to call home."

"We have long called for more innovative responses to improving Victoria's social housing system and in announcing Australia's largest ever investment in public and community housing, the Victorian Government has resoundingly achieved this goal."

The 2,900 new affordable homes announced as part of the package will include homes in Melbourne as well as regional Victoria. The new homes will meet seven-star energy efficient standards.

"This is important because it will ultimately mean tenants pay less on their power bills, and can live more comfortably. Too often we hear that vulnerable people are reluctant to use heating and cooling because of the cost, but the seven-star energy efficiency standards mean tenants in these new houses will no longer have that fear. This also creates a more sustainable and ecologically just Victoria."

Jesuit Social Services also welcomes the fact that these projects will create new jobs for women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and people from diverse backgrounds.

"Supporting more people into meaningful employment is critical as we navigate our way towards a COVID-normal future."