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New housing initiatives will support more people to flourish: Jesuit Social Services

The Victorian Government's recent housing initiatives – including a new social housing complex and funding for projects to support young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness – will ensure more Victorians have a safe and secure place to call home, says Jesuit Social Services.

“It is extremely challenging for people to flourish or reach their potential if they do not have a safe and secure roof over their head. Adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and crucial to a person's ability to lead a healthy and productive life and to make a positive contribution to society,” says Jesuit Social Services Acting CEO Sally Parnell.

The Victorian Government recently opened a new 48-apartment social housing complex – supporting people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness and victims of family violence – and announced \$50 million for new housing projects and initiatives for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The latter will include funding for projects supporting young Victorians leaving out of home care.

“Every day, Jesuit Social Services works with people who are experiencing, have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, including people with mental health and substance abuse problems, newly arrived refugees and migrants, people exiting prison and people leaving out-of-home-care services.

“We see that people who face barriers to housing can also face barriers to employment and other critical things many take for granted. Of the participants of Jesuit Social Services' 'housing and complex needs' programs who were categorised as homeless as at 30 June 2019, more than 90 per cent of people had used drugs or alcohol since their referral, more than 80 per cent were experiencing mental health symptoms and almost 60 per cent had experienced family violence.

“By ensuring vulnerable people have access to housing, we can support them to address other problems they may be experiencing and build more productive, cohesive and safer communities.”

“People under 35 have been identified the largest age group of people experiencing homelessness in Victoria. In our submission to the Victorian Government's 10-Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy, we highlighted the importance of providing tailored and targeted services to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This funding will ensure more young people can access the support they need to turn their lives around.

The Victorian Government announced a \$5.3 billion investment into social and affordable housing as part of the most recent Victorian State Budget 2020/21, which ultimately committed to increase Victoria's social housing supply by 10 per cent in the next four years.

“These announcements will make a tangible difference to the lives of many vulnerable Victorians, and give them the best opportunity to lead positive lives,” says Ms Parnell.

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