



# Media Release

## Men who have used family violence co-design a pilot to disrupt the pattern of abuse

**For immediate release: 11 May, 2024**

A new pilot program developed by McAuley Community Services for Women, co-designed by victims of violence and some men who have used violence is ready to roll out but needs urgent government and philanthropic funding.

Safe at Home is an EARLY INTERVENTION model that shifts the default system of helping women 'escape' violence to enabling them to stay at home while actively disrupting the pattern of abuse.

Family violence is the single largest driver of homelessness for women in Victoria. In 2022-23, over 23,000 women and 13,000 children who had experienced family violence were assisted by homelessness services (AIHW, 2023). Each year in Australia, **7960** women are returning to live with people who use violence because they have nowhere affordable to live (Equity Economics, 2021)

Even with the Federal Governments \$5000 escaping violence payment, there is little hope for accessing affordable housing, with the wait time for family violence victim-survivors averaging close to two years (DFFH, 2024).

McAuley Community Services for Women operates refuge accommodation, CEO Jocelyn Bignold OAM is adamant that it's time for a broader conversation.

"Safety is always a priority but triaging women and children into over-burdened emergency accommodation away from their homes, schools and community support is not working. Family violence of all kinds is rarely a single event, it is often multi-generational and there are early warning signs. We need education to spot the red flags, intervene before safety becomes an issue and provide support and accountability for everyone at risk - including those who use violence."

Ms Bignold says input from those with lived experience was integral to the design of the Safe at Home initiative. "We have consulted extensively with our teams and women who have used family violence services to find out what works and what doesn't. It was important to include users of violence in those conversations too. They provided valuable insight into what would help them avoid using violence that has helped develop new pathways aimed at breaking the cycle of abuse before their family is at risk."

Safe at Home could be activated within 48 hours of referral and includes a single case manager to establish a safety plan identify a priority of immediate and ongoing needs. If required short- or medium-term accommodation options for the person using violence will be arranged with Police and Court Services integration to keep them in view. Run by Meli in Geelong, the two-year trial would provide survivors and people who use violence with access to a large team of legal and financial experts along with wider support specialists in housing, child, and cultural workers.



## Media information:

More information on Safe at Home can be found here:

<https://www.mcauley.org.au/about/advocacy/safe-at-home/>

## About McAuley Community Services for Women:

McAuley supports women and children who have faced family violence and homelessness to take control of their lives.

Starting with accommodation and meeting immediate needs, we support women and their children to be safe. We provide 24/7 crisis support and temporary accommodation, independent housing and supported community care.

McAuley House, Footscray and Ballarat, provide inhouse support to women who are homeless, many of whom have also experienced family violence. It is a place for rest, recovery and reconnection, as well as being a welcoming hub for women and children who have moved into the surrounding community.

## Media contact: **Kellie Curtain**

Media Consultant

0412 339 690

[kellie@indeliblemarks.net](mailto:kellie@indeliblemarks.net)

## **Felicity Pringle,**

Head of Communications, Advocacy and Fundraising

McAuley Community Services for Women

0418 105 500

[felicityp@mcauley.org.au](mailto:felicityp@mcauley.org.au)