

Minister opens new best-practice family violence refuge in west

Media release

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As gender-based violence continues at alarming rates, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence Natalie Hutchins officially opened *Jan's Place*, McAuley's purpose-built refuge on Melbourne's western fringe that can house up to 20 women and children.

In line with best-practice recommendations from Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, *Jan's Place* has a 'core and cluster' design with six family units facing a shared outdoor space and connected to a central hub housing support services and communal areas.

McAuley CEO Jocelyn Bignold OAM said there is very high demand for accommodation facilities like *Jan's Place*, which are designated for those at greatest risk of harm from family violence.

"There are still too many women and children in motel rooms every night or returning to partners due to lack of appropriate accommodation. Refuge accommodation like *Jan's Place* is crucial for keeping them safe and helping them move toward a future without violence," said Ms Bignold.

"Melbourne's western fringe is experiencing significant population growth and housing development, and *Jan's Place* will help meet the urgent need for more services in the west.

"*Jan's Place* expands McAuley's existing accommodation and support throughout the western corridor from inner Melbourne to Ballarat for women and children experiencing family violence and will allow so many more women and children to receive the individualised, wraparound support that McAuley and our partners are known for – such as legal, financial, health and employment support."

Minister Hutchins said safe and stable housing is vital for women and children affected by family violence.

"Women and children fleeing family violence should feel safe and supported and this new refuge will help support them back into housing, rebuild their family and community connections and begin their journey toward independence," said Minister Hutchins.

"The core and cluster refuge model enables women and children to live independently, with easy access to 24/7 on-site services to provide flexible support to meet the varying needs of victim survivors."

While older-style refuges had communal living spaces, best-practice design now focuses on providing private spaces for women and children to support their recovery. *Jan's Place* has:

- Six individual, accessible units that are modern and comfortable, with private entrances, kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and courtyards
- Flexible floorplans and interconnecting rooms that can be configured differently to provide suitable bedrooms for large or smaller families
- Indoor and outdoor play spaces

- A common room, central kitchen and spaces where residents can get support from specialist family violence practitioners and children's workers, to meet their immediate needs and help them plan for a safer future
- Pet-friendly accommodation, including small, enclosed yards suitable for dogs
- Staff on site 24 hours a day, seven days per week to assist residents
- A convenient location within walking distance of shops, parks and public transport.

"*Jan's Place* is a safe, welcoming place where women and children can begin to heal within the privacy of their own unit, while being assisted to rebuild their family and community connections, develop their independent living skills and begin their journey toward independence," said Ms Bignold.

"With rates of family violence soaring and the current housing crisis, there has never been greater demand for these services."

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