

Cohort 03 of 08

Refuge to Permanence: Women 45+ Leaving Domestic Violence

A women-only, permanent campus model: addressing financial recovery, safety, and the rebuilding of identity and independence for older women leaving DV.

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Women 45+ · Post-DV Trauma · Financial Recovery · Women-Only Campus · Permanent Tenure

The Convergence of Crises

Older women leaving domestic violence face a convergence of crises that standard social housing does not address: no credit history in their own name; interrupted superannuation from years of unpaid care work; complex trauma responses that make large communal environments re-traumatising; and a social isolation that violence has deliberately cultivated. Older women were the fastest-growing group experiencing homelessness in Australia between the 2011 and 2016 Censuses, and the number of homeless women aged 55 and over rose again, to 7,325, in 2021 (ABS).

"She does not need a programme. She needs a home, a lock on her door, and time. Give her those three things and she will rebuild everything else herself."

The campus is women-only and permanent from day one. There is no move-on timeline. Women arrive and stay.

ZONE 1 · RESIDENTIAL: SAFETY AND PERMANENCE

- Women-only campus: staff, residents, and regular visitors all women or non-binary
- Secure perimeter: controlled access without institutional feel; natural landscaping as boundary

- No signage identifying the complex as DV-related: referral-only access; address suppressed from public databases
- High-quality locks, smart entry: no master key access without 48-hour notice and resident present
- Permanent tenancy from day one: no move-on date, no transitional status
- Fully furnished on arrival: not bare walls; immediate sense of home
- Pets welcomed: animals frequently left behind when fleeing; reunification prioritised
- Former partners and named individuals can be barred by resident request: no justification required

ZONE 2 · COMMUNITY HUB: REBUILDING AND CONNECTION

- Financial independence programme: bank accounts, credit history, superannuation, Centrelink; practical, non-judgmental
- Legal clinic: family law, property settlement, AVOs, name change; women's legal specialist monthly
- Employment support: resume, interview, micro-business; geared to women with career gaps
- Peer support group: facilitated by women with lived DV experience, not clinical staff
- Social connection: book group, garden club, cooking collective, art space; chosen by residents
- Quiet lounge with no programme schedule: space to simply be

ZONE 3 · CLINICAL AND THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

- Trauma-informed counsellor (women's specialist): 3 days/week, self-referral only
- GP with DV and women's health specialism: weekly visiting clinic
- Somatic therapy available: trauma held in the body requires body-based approaches
- No mandatory counselling: women who have been controlled do not need more mandatory participation
- Crisis protocol: clear, fast pathway if former partner appears; police liaison officer relationship maintained

Address privacy	Not in public databases. Mail via PO Box. Google Maps listing suppressed.
CCTV	External perimeter only. No internal surveillance. Privacy within campus is absolute.
Financial support	Tenancy bond paid by programme. Rent at 25% of income.

Move-on policy	None. This is permanent housing. The only exit is by resident choice.
Unit mix	12 × 1-bed, 4 × 2-bed (dependent/carer), 4 fully accessible: 18 units total

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