



# Department of Social Services Safe Places Inclusion Round Consultation Findings

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**CIRCA Findings from Sector Stakeholder Focus Groups**

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All research conducted by CIRCA for this project was in compliance with ISO 20252:2019 Market, Opinion and Social Research



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters in which we work and the knowledge-holders of the oldest continuous cultures in the world. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>CALD</b>	culturally and linguistically diverse
<b>DSS</b>	Department of Social Services
<b>FDV</b>	family and domestic violence
<b>Safe Places</b>	Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

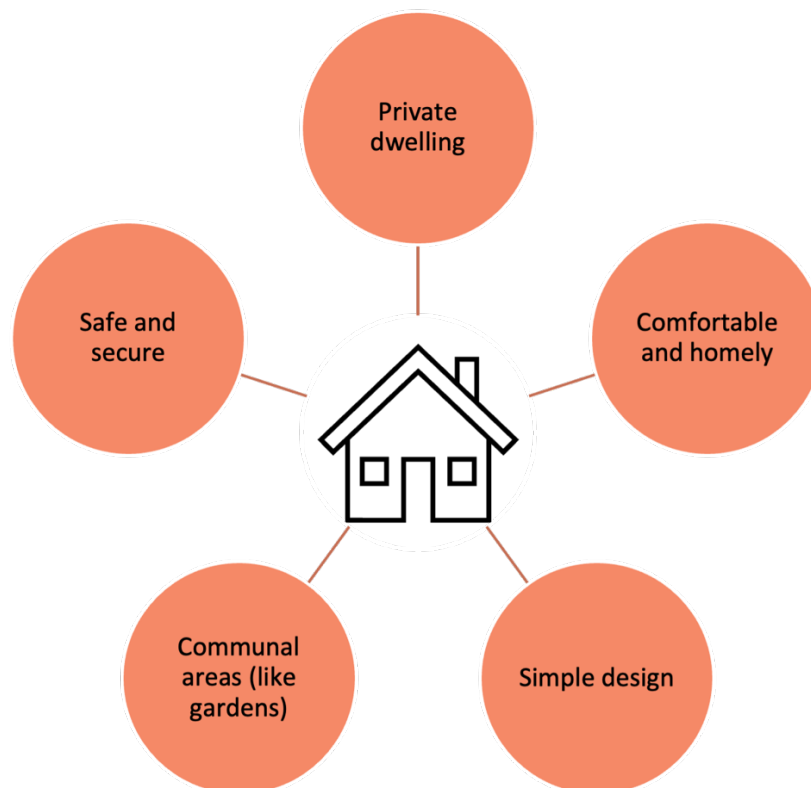
CIRCA conducted 6 online focus groups with sector stakeholders from 23 February to 7 March 2023 to explore the accessibility and cultural needs of women and children victim-survivors of family and domestic violence (FDV), who access emergency accommodation. Participants were experienced in working with First Nations women and children, with women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, or with women and children with disability, and represented organisations that service urban and regional or remote areas.

This section summarises the key findings from the research.

## Appropriate design features and location for emergency accommodation

- Focus group participants suggested some physical design and cultural features needed by all women and children victim-survivors exiting FDV, regardless of background or identity. These include a dwelling that is **safe and secure, private, comfortable, simple** and, where possible, blocks of dwellings have a **communal area like a garden** (illustrated in Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Key features recommended for all women and children victim-survivors in emergency accommodation.





- Stakeholders representing organisations with expertise working with CALD women and children suggested features such as **prayer spaces, enough rooms for large families, and separate kitchens.**
- Participants suggested features for First Nations women and children should include a **cultural space and guidance from local Elders on the location.**
- Stakeholders in the disability sector emphasised the **importance of private dwellings for families with disabilities, a separate room for carers, rooms tailored to clients' specific needs and sensory awareness** when designing accommodation.
- Participants found the Livable Housing Silver Level appropriate for most women and children, but **some suggested that Gold or Platinum Level is more suitable to be accessible for those with disability.**
- In terms of location, stakeholders suggested that a **central location is important for emergency accommodation, but not on a main road** to ensure privacy and safety. Participants also reported that emergency accommodation should be **close to shops, public transport and other wrap-around supports and services.**

#### Supports and services required alongside emergency accommodation

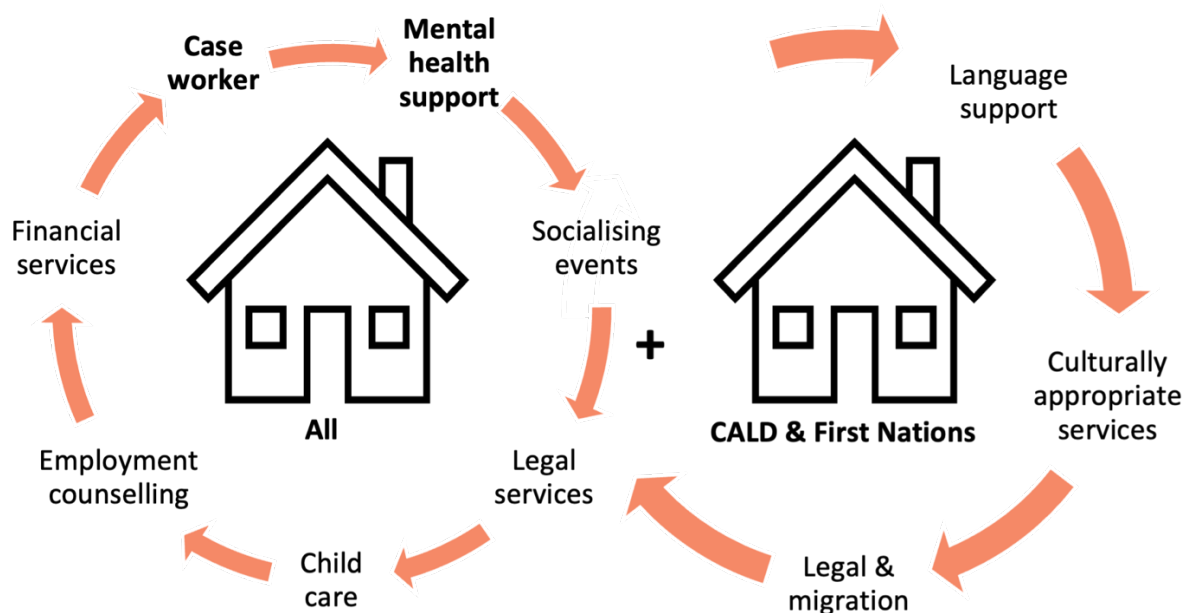


Figure 2: Suggested services for all women and children victim-survivors, and additional services required for CALD and First Nations women and children (**bolded** services are most critical, immediately upon entry)

- Stakeholders emphasised **most importantly the need for all women and children victim-survivors in emergency accommodation to have access to an individual case manager or support worker, as well as mental health support**, alongside other supports and services (illustrated in Figure 2 below).
- The need for **language support through translated materials and interpreters, and legal and migration support** was identified as crucial for women and children from CALD backgrounds, with **culturally safe delivery of all services**. Language support was also suggested for some First Nations women and children, particularly in remote areas.

### Grant application inclusion criteria

- Focus group participants were asked how grant applicants can demonstrate their ability to meet the needs of women and children victim-survivors from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds, and what elements may be a red flag in applications. These are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Recommended application requirements and red flags

Applicant priorities/requirements	Applicant red flags
✓ Established partnerships with other services	✗ No track record in the sector
✓ Connections with the community they serve	✗ Poor building records
✓ Plan to consult with those with lived experience	✗ Lack of meaningful links to the communities they serve or partnerships with other community organisations
✓ Demonstrate staff training	✗ Mainstream organisations providing all services
✓ Demonstrate relevant organisational audits	
✓ Present positive client referrals	
✓ Demonstrated cultural safety	
✓ Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	
✓ Identified positions for First Nations women	
✓ Active Reconciliation Action Plan	

### Barriers in applying for and managing grants, and support DSS can provide

- Focus group participants were asked about their previous experience applying for grants and the ways in which DSS could support them in their application. Stakeholders identified a **lack of available time to dedicate to program design and proposal writing**, and a **lack of internal grant-writing expertise** as common challenges in applying for grants.
- Stakeholders suggested ways DSS could support applicants for the grant, as well as organisations that are successful in funding. These are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Suggestions for DSS support in applying for and managing a grant

Department support in applying for the grant	Department support in managing successful grants
- Provide clear information through workshops or forums	- Provide ongoing or flexible funding, especially for regional or remote areas
- Give feedback on applications	- Fund services in addition to capital works
- Provide additional time and funding for preparing applications	- Fund and encourage training for staff in successful grantee organisations
- Encourage partnerships between organisations	- Facilitate connections to partners
- Provide opportunity for initial proposal or EOI	- Allow autonomy in choosing contractors

### Core themes to inform the Inclusion Round

- Core themes that emerged in the findings were that **the Inclusion Round should fund the building of emergency accommodation that reflects the unique needs of each community, fund organisations that have and will continue to consult with the community and clients, fund organisations that will provide wrap-around services, and enable small- and medium-sized organisations to apply** for the grant.
- Recurring themes related to the physical design, cultural features and location of emergency accommodation; services to offer alongside accommodation; the grant assessment process; and grant support provided by DSS. These are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Consultation themes

Recurring themes from consultation	
<b>Physical design</b>	The grant opportunity should encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- private dwellings</li> <li>- mix of bedroom numbers and sizes</li> <li>- safety and security features</li> <li>- communal gardens</li> <li>- accessible design.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural features</b>	The grant opportunity should encourage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- prayer spaces</li> <li>- cultural spaces</li> <li>- private kitchens.</li> </ul>

Recurring themes from consultation	
<b>Location</b>	<p>The grant opportunity should encourage and prioritise the development of accommodation that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- close to shops</li> <li>- close to public transport</li> <li>- private and off the main street</li> <li>- reflective of input from First Nations leaders and Elders.</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<p>The grant opportunity should ensure organisations prioritise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- offering women and children choice in accessing services in person or remotely</li> <li>- providing a case worker for all women and children</li> <li>- providing mental health support for all women and children.</li> </ul>
<b>Grant assessment</b>	<p>In applications, DSS should look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrated understanding of local needs</li> <li>- meaningful links to the communities they serve or partnerships with other community organisations</li> <li>- culturally safe practices and policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Grant support</b>	<p>During application and grant management, DSS should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support applicants with workshops or forums during the grant application process</li> <li>- provide additional time and funding for preparing the application</li> <li>- provide staff from successful grantee organisations with training in grant management</li> <li>- provide and facilitate connections to housing construction partners, e.g., builders or designers.</li> </ul>

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government has made a commitment of \$100 million over 5 years (2022-23 to 2026-27) to the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Safe Places), via an Inclusion Round of capital works investment that will fund the building, renovation or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving domestic and family violence. The Inclusion Round will focus on improving access to emergency accommodation for women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and First Nations backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has enlisted CIRCA to identify the accessibility and cultural needs of these cohorts by consulting with stakeholders who service these cohorts and with women and children who have lived experience of family and domestic violence (FDV) and emergency accommodation. The information collected through these consultations will inform: the overall design of the Inclusion Round; the Grant Opportunity Guidelines released as part of the Inclusion Round; resources for grant applicants; and the design specifications for, and construction of, Safe Places.

This report presents the findings from focus groups with specialist sector stakeholders. These consultations explored the following research questions:

- What are the physical design and cultural features needed within emergency accommodation, to support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds?
- What other supports or services are needed to support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds when they are in emergency accommodation? Which are most critical and at what time points?
- What should the grant application process require applicants demonstrate to ensure they will meet the needs of victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds for emergency accommodation?
- What should the Grant Application Review Team look out for as red flags that suggest the applicant will not do an adequate job supporting victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds in emergency accommodation?
- What other services should be in proximity to the accommodation to fully support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds as they exit domestic and family violence?
- How should DSS manage and support successful grant applicants in the implementation of their projects?

Victim-survivors with lived experience of FDV and emergency accommodation services will be consulted via one-on-one interviews in the next phase of research and these findings will be presented in a secondary report.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The focus groups provided a platform for organisations with expertise with First Nations, CALD and disability support, comprising sector stakeholders within these areas who deliver or have expertise in urban areas, and regional/remote areas. Table 4 illustrates the breakdown of focus groups by characteristic.

Table 4: Characteristics of focus groups

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4	Focus Group 5	Focus Group 6
<b>Geographic expertise</b>	Urban	Regional/remote	Urban	Regional/remote	Regional/remote*	Regional/remote
<b>Cohort expertise</b>	Disability	Disability	CALD	CALD	First Nations	First Nations
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories

\*Unable to recruit participants who had expertise in urban areas for First Nations groups, so focus groups 5 and 6 included stakeholders with expertise in regional/remote areas.

Criteria for inclusion were:

- expertise in First Nations, CALD and/or disability support
- experience with and expertise in emergency accommodation, and domestic and family violence (where possible)

Those excluded were:

- organisations without a specific mandate for, or expertise in, any of the three cohorts (First Nations, CALD or disability).

A recruitment screener was used to ensure participants were eligible for the research (Appendix 1). For all groups, recruitment aimed to include a mixture of service providers and advocacy groups, as well as a mix of jurisdictional representation across states and territories. For the regional/remote groups, a mix of organisations that service both regional and remote areas was also included.

Participants were recruited via contacts provided by DSS and through CIRCA research consultants' networks.

### 3.1 Focus groups

As Table 4 shows, 6 focus groups were conducted across cohort and geographic expertise, resulting in 36 individual participants. The focus groups were held between 23 February 2023 and 7 March 2023, via Zoom. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes.

A team of CIRCA research consultants facilitated the discussions in English. Each research participant received a copy of the Participant Information Statement (Appendix 2). After they had read and understood this, and answered all questions, the participants were then asked to verbally confirm their consent, which was audio-recorded.

The Discussion Guide (Appendix 3) used by CIRCA research consultants covered topics including the recommended physical design and cultural features needed in emergency housing, provision of services, and guidance on selecting and supporting appropriate grant applications. The research consultants showed a stimulus to the participants to provide more information around some of the topics (Appendix 4). Each participant received an incentive payment of \$80 to thank and compensate them for their time.

### 3.2 Data analysis

Focus group notes and transcripts were analysed using NVivo. A coding framework was generated based on the research questions, complete with definitions. The coding framework was then reviewed and approved by the CIRCA Research Director.

The data was then coded in NVivo and analysed aligning to each of the research questions.

### 3.3 Limitations

CIRCA research consultants met challenges recruiting stakeholders with expertise in urban areas for the First Nations groups, which resulted in both First Nations groups including only those who specialise in regional or remote service delivery or advocacy. Nonetheless, these groups yielded rich insights into the needs of women and children in emergency accommodation, and in how the government can support smaller organisations based outside urban centres.

Qualitative research can provide rich descriptions of how people experience and feel about a given issue or topic. However, the results of qualitative research are not representative of the overall target population due to relatively small sample sizes and selection methods. In qualitative research, a rich and complex understanding is prioritised over collecting data that can be generalised more broadly. Qualitative enquiry also allows researchers to incorporate non-verbal cues, interactions and observations into the research process to add meaning to the results.



### 3.4 Lessons learned

Some of the difficulties encountered in recruitment provided lessons for future projects.

- Recruiting and scheduling of consultations with sector stakeholders requires that enough time be allowed to accommodate the busy schedules of those working in the sector, and the challenges of reaching eligible and interested potential participants. Ultimately, we found that five weeks was enough time for this aspect of the project, and completing this in less time would have proved difficult to recruit and schedule potential participants.
- Individuals initially contacted or identified may not be the right fit to participate in the consultation – they may be ineligible, not quite have the knowledge or expertise to participate, or be unavailable. It is important therefore to allow time for those initially contacted to forward the invitation on to someone they think will be a better fit. This is particularly important if the list of initial contacts consists largely of CEOs.
- When reaching out to CEOs, it is important to send an email ahead of a phone call.
- Recruiting through CIRCA's own community connections and networks facilitated the diversification and expansion of the recruitment process, as well as timely completion of the recruitment phase.
- Additionally, utilising existing channels of engagement through DSS with specialist sector stakeholders alongside CIRCA recruitment could increase early confirmation of participation.

## 4. FINDINGS

This section presents the research findings organised according to the research questions guiding the consultations.

### 4.1 What are the physical design and cultural features needed within emergency accommodation, to support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds?

#### 4.1.1 Physical design and cultural features

##### 4.1.1.1 Physical design and cultural features relevant for all women and children

Participants across the 6 groups gave examples of physical design and cultural features needed to best support women and children in emergency accommodation. Although the participants represented organisations working with women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds, many of the examples provided are relevant for all women and children in emergency housing, regardless of identity.

These **features include physical elements that allow for the safety of the resident**, such as:

- lockable rooms and security systems
- back lane entrance/exit for police access and support (without needing to be out the front of the accommodation)
- adequate lighting inside buildings and at entrances
- house number not visible at the front
- a garage or off-street parking spot for a car, which is not visible from the street
- minimal glass furniture and kitchenware in the accommodation, which can lead to accidents
- low-rise buildings with a preference for the ground floor
- less furniture, particularly if someone has a history of mental health issues or self-harm.

‘[They should] not show any house numbers on the buildings as the children [who might still have contact with Dad through court orders] might tell him.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘Lighting being an aspect of safety ... around street entrance and adequate lighting inside buildings...entry and [rear entrances] have an undercover [awning] where a [security] camera can be installed.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

**Another aspect required of appropriate emergency accommodation is that the spaces are comfortable and homely**, where people feel they can rest and belong. One stakeholder with expertise in disability raised the need to keep the design simple to prevent the physical environment from being overwhelming as the women and children are navigating an already complex situation.

‘The room designs should be as homely as possible to allow women and children feel a sense of normalcy even as they flee the family home.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

‘There's a kitchen that looks like a kitchen, not an office building ... those are things that help children maintain a sense of normalcy, even though they're living in an abnormal situation.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

‘I think sometimes it’s about keeping it simple. In particular after going through trauma ... domestic violence, or PTSD, you go into these sort of accommodation places.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

**Participants commonly raised the importance of women and children having their own space in the accommodation (for both privacy and safety), and prioritised private houses or apartments over shared spaces or dormitories.**

‘The majority of the time [in available emergency accommodation] it’s shared lounge rooms, or like a communal kitchen. And for someone that’s just going through DV or escaping DV, like you said, it’s about healing ... and dealing with trauma and stuff, there’s also something embarrassing ... you don’t want to be seeing or dealing with other women and people that you don’t know.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

However, stakeholders suggested that the **accommodation should include some communal areas, like a shared garden or living space**. Communal spaces allow for a sense of community and a place for women and children to connect with each other, and can also serve as a safe place for women and children to meet with support workers or other services.

‘Safe meeting spaces [like] a space for outside workers to be able to meet with clients.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘A little inside garden... [where women and children can] express themselves, paint, do some gardening and a place where they can do some exercise.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

**The accommodation should allow for women and children to have a choice in how they live.** The sector stakeholders emphasised that choice is vital for women and children who have experienced domestic violence, not only to cater to the needs of each individual and family, but also to encourage empowerment.

‘When I worked in homelessness we had two huge wardrobes with all sorts of different things, and when a woman and the children came, we just let them choose what they want ... different colours, different shapes ... and we asked them, what would they prefer, of course, for the first couple of nights the beds and everything is done for them, but then we also let them know that they can have different choices if they wish to.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

Participants suggested accommodation should include appropriate technology systems, including enough power outlets and chargers, as well as facilities for clients to use phones and online language interpreters.

#### 4.1.1.2 Physical design and cultural features relevant for women and children from CALD backgrounds

Stakeholders who represented organisations with expertise working with women and children from CALD backgrounds noted some **additional features that are particularly important in ensuring emergency accommodation is culturally appropriate**. The most frequently raised features specific to CALD women and children included:

- prayer or spiritual spaces
- enough rooms within dwellings to accommodate large families
- each woman or family having their own separate kitchen
- not labelling the accommodation as a ‘refuge’, which may be triggering or retraumatising because of the association with the words ‘refugee’ or ‘refugee camp’.

‘For some cultures, having a separate space to pray is very important.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘CALD women and children need access to their own private dwelling including a kitchen ... most hostels don’t have a kitchenette. [This should be a] private kitchen for safety as well as cultural/religious reasons.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

'We need big spaces, especially for women with lots of children ... some of [the existing spaces] are shared beds in one room, with different families ... which is very inconvenient for them.'  
(Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

#### 4.1.1.3 Physical design and cultural features relevant for First Nations women and children

Participants raised some **design and culture specifications that are particularly important when providing emergency accommodation to First Nations women and children**. Stakeholders expressed the importance of spaces big enough to accommodate large families with several children. One participant mentioned the preference among many First Nations families to sleep in one room, suggesting that some units provide a smaller bedroom as an option for a single woman or with one child, but with a room divider that can open up and be turned into one larger room.

'I think every unit needs to have ... an option for a single, and then it needs to probably have a room divider, where you can open it up, and then make it into one bigger room ...'  
(Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

One specific suggestion was a cultural space for women and children to participate in activities of their choice, or as a place for connecting and healing with others.

'There could be [an area] outside, where they can sit around a fire if they want, if that's what it needs. That cultural space... So whenever there's ... loss and grief, it could be a space where the families get together...a healing place.'  
(Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Other participants raised a concern about the age limit for male children to accompany their mother into the accommodation, noting that it was especially inappropriate in First Nations and CALD communities and leaves their male children at risk. In this situation, a participant suggested a standalone unit that they could occupy as mother and son.

'The age [limit] for male children [in emergency accommodation] will need to be lifted as only women and their daughters can access the safe homes. [Male] children over the age of 12 or 14 aren't allowed. So they are leaving their male child at risk. In these scenarios, a standalone unit would work.'  
(Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Stakeholders with expertise working with First Nations women and children recommended **being mindful of the history of the land on which the accommodation is built**. Historical events involving First Nations peoples can cause discomfort or distress if they occurred near the accommodation, as well as potential for some people who hold particular spiritual beliefs to experience ongoing connection to a

place. Stakeholders suggested that clients should have input and choice on location, with guidance from local Elders, alongside a review of historical events of an area. Some First Nations women and children may prefer newly built buildings.

'I know with Aboriginal women, they like new properties, because of ghosts. But ... it could just be land that's haunted, you know what I mean? So even if you put a new property on there, they've still got the history ... So, I think it's community that needs to pick that, and if they feel that's the right feel for them.' (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

#### 4.1.1.4 Physical design and cultural features relevant for women and children with disability

Stakeholders with expertise in the disability sector raised some physical design features that are especially important when creating appropriate housing for women and children with disability. Most frequently raised was the need for **each family to have their own private dwelling, of particular importance when a family member has a physical disability or mental health condition.**

'In residential care ... people like to put like 2 women or 3 women in the same house or one apartment. I think that's so difficult for women especially [if] they have family violence experience, because most of them also have the mental illness and severe PTSD, so to provide them a private space ... is quite important because in that way, some women their emotion is quite unstable ... [then they] can't affect the other one.' (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

'I think one house for one family is better than sharing the same house with other families.' (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

Other features suggested by participants include:

- a separate room in the house or apartment for a carer to stay if needed
- rooms tailored to each client's specific needs
- sensory awareness in shared spaces, especially for children's play areas (ensuring that spaces are suitable for those with neurodiversity)
- contrasting colours for walls and furniture, to assist people with vision impairments.

'In my experience, some NDIS clients, they need 24 hours support. So maybe 2 bedroom is better for them because one is for carer and one is for the client.' (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

'It's very difficult for people with disability to navigate ... you could have the walls with different colours that allowed them to see easily furniture and chairs and cushions.'  
(Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

All participants were asked about the appropriateness of the Livable Housing Silver Level for emergency accommodation for women and children who have experienced domestic violence. Participants largely felt the Silver Level was appropriate for most women and children, however **to be fully accessible to people with a disability, the design should meet Gold or Platinum Level.**

Some participants commented on other elements that should be included for accessible emergency accommodation, such as accessible benchtops and surfaces that are an appropriate height for people who use a wheelchair, and a full wet room rather than just a hobless shower. One participant questioned why grab rails are not already required in all bathrooms, rather than requiring the walls to be reinforced in the event of installation.

'Where it says, :safe installation of grab rails at a later date". I mean, why can't you just do it when you build it? Because renovation is always more costly, and if you put grab rails, which are much stronger, so ... from day one, the person using that is already well protected.'  
(Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

'Silver is fine as a design spec if somebody doesn't have a mobility aid. But considering most families ... that we service have a mobility or a disability, it's better to probably go with the Platinum or the Gold as a standard set because the requirements ... But I guess it depends on the proposal on which cohort that you plan on delivering to.' (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

#### 4.1.2 Location

Participants were asked about appropriate locations for emergency housing. Several sector stakeholders raised **the importance of accommodation being in a central location (though not on a main road) and in an understated building to protect the safety and privacy of the women and children** residing there. This a particular issue for women and children from CALD backgrounds, as some cultural or linguistic communities can be small (especially in regional and remote areas) and there may be stigma surrounding domestic violence, and women leaving their partners. One participant noted the importance of a quiet area, as areas with lots of disruption and sirens, for example, may cause distress or anxiety for women and children with a lived experience of domestic violence.

'It needs to be central ... but not on a main street, because women still want a degree of privacy and anonymity when they're accessing these services. So centrally located, but not a

brand-new building with bells and whistles on a main street.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

‘I know people who will continue to live in an abusive household, just because everybody knows them, and they don’t want that sort of shame to be a part of their journey.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘Some [women and children] get anxious living in a noisy area, [including when there are] police sirens and persons of authority.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

While maintaining privacy and quietness, another aspect of the location frequently raised as important for emergency accommodation **was ensuring the accommodation was close to shops and public transport**. Other needs for location included proximity to:

- their prior neighbourhood or location, so they do not need to completely relocate
- child care and schooling
- other supports and services, such as Centrelink and banks.

‘[It should be] close to the special school, close to the primary school, close to the shops, reasonably close to like Centrelink, and close to services. Because don't forget that in a lot of country areas public transport is really limited. So, women are either on foot or relying on transport through other people.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

For women and children from CALD backgrounds, one stakeholder flagged the importance of accommodation being close to community and ethno-specific grocery stores, as some women from particular cultural backgrounds prefer not to shop at major supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths.

#### 4.2 What other supports or services are needed to support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds when they are in emergency accommodation? Which are most critical and at what time points?

The most frequent suggestion about supports for women and children in emergency accommodation made across stakeholder cohorts was **the need for a support worker or case manager for each individual**. Many participants, with a variety of cohort expertise, stressed this was the most critical support required for women and children. Support workers can help them access and navigate broader systems, transport and other practical supports, and also provide emotional support. Importantly,



participants stressed support workers and case managers must have expertise in domestic violence and training in trauma-informed service provision.

‘A support worker who can take them anywhere to access and navigate the different systems around town and provide assistance with transitional housing.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘I think they need an individual case manager or support worker...like the DV support workers who really understand domestic and family violence ... the support worker can also provide the women with practical needs like taking them out ...’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

‘A case manager can help them to find the appropriate services ... they can help with assessing the GPs, psychologists, or psychiatrists...and then also help them to find long-term accommodation ... and help them to learn some basic skills to live independently. I mean how to budget, pay bills and attend appointments.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

‘There should be case management attached to each client. This ranges from emergency support at time of crisis to long-term supports for women who are transiting into the community.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Participants reported **a case manager or support worker is needed immediately when a woman or child moves into emergency accommodation, and should then continue during the time they are there, until they transition into the community.** Some participants suggest case managers should be on site at the accommodation and available 24 hours.

‘Most importantly, they need access to trauma-informed support services. Right from the get-go, they need case management to assess what is the current need. So, once they are safe, physically safe from harm.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

Participants suggested other supports and services needed for women and children generally in emergency accommodation, such as:

- socialising events or opportunities to connect with others
- child care
- legal services
- employment counselling
- financial services.

Aside from a case manager or support worker, participants in each of the groups also **identified counselling and emotional support** as critical. The view among most participants is that women and children need immediate practical and emotional support, and to ensure their personal safety. After that point, other services can be prioritised.

‘I think counselling or emotional support should go side by side with practical support, because once you go into a refuge, your life kind of goes upside down.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

While a majority of supports and services raised by participants are relevant for all women and children, **stakeholders suggested some that are particularly critical for women and children from CALD backgrounds. Most frequently reported was the need for language support** through translated materials and interpreters, and **legal assistance for migration and visa support**.

‘Language support ... even for basic things ... and especially legal documents.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘Visa support through a migration agent...as many women are on temporary visas and are unsure of how it impacts their status.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

An important consideration raised by those with expertise working with CALD women and children is the need for interpreters to be appropriate for the situation. For women who have experienced domestic violence, for example, it is important all services, including interpreters, are provided by women.

‘Women-only services and supports [are critical] ... For a woman that has been subjected to DV and/or sexual violence – a female interpreter is paramount.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘All the clients just disengage with the mainstream services. So [it’s important] for the shelter to include this kind of service, as well to help to find some trusted interpreters and secure them for those women, and make them feel safe, and to live in there as well because the CALD community is quite small.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

Other services considered important for CALD women and children include:

- spiritual or religious support
- culturally safe and culturally competent delivery within services such as:
  - housing

- legal services
- police.

‘[They need] facilities and resources that are culturally appropriate and safe, acknowledging the need for staff with diversity training and workers with cultural competence.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

**While language support was frequently raised as a requirement for women and children with CALD backgrounds, one group indicated First Nations women and children also often need it**, particularly in regional and remote areas where English is the second or third language for some. One participant suggested it is critical for First Nations women and children in emergency accommodation to have access to Elder support.

‘Elder support in the community is also critical. They would want to talk about their experience and get support from Elders.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Participants raised the need for a greater supply of transitional housing. While the construction of transitional housing is not in the scope for the Safe Places Inclusion Round, stakeholders suggested the **lack of transitional housing may put extra pressure on emergency accommodation** if women and children must remain there due to a lack of options beyond that.

‘We don’t have any transitional housing, like once ... a client comes in, and then they stay at the shelter, and then there’s no pathway out and where are they going to go? Because...there’s no private rental or anything like that in community, so that’s where we’re at. Where we feel like we keep helping the same clients because there’s nowhere to go.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

### 4.3 What other services should be in proximity to the accommodation to fully support victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds as they exit domestic and family violence?

When detailing the services that should be accessible to women and children while they are in emergency accommodation, participants were asked which of these need to be accessed in-person, and which could be accessed remotely.

In general, stakeholders responded that **all services should be accessible in-person wherever possible – but most importantly, women and children should have the option of both in-person and remote access for all services**. The option of face-to-face allows for more responsive and supportive

engagement with the client in discussing a sensitive topic. Limitations in digital literacy, English language proficiency or first language literacy can also hinder people's ability to access online services.

'Because of the nature of the discussions that need to be had, most women prefer for that to be face-to-face ... if a woman breaks down, at least you can respond in a compassionate manner. It's not just what the women say, but also their body language.' (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

**A couple of focus groups considered that having a case manager or support worker who stays on site at the emergency accommodation is important, as is the availability of 24-hour support.**

Stakeholders currently servicing regional and remote areas raised the issue of services not being based locally, and working on a fly-in fly-out basis. Participants raised concerns that organisations and staff not based locally were unable to build the required relationships with their clients.

'If you know you're getting a lot of people that fly in, fly out, you don't see them no more. Come and do all the stuff and you don't see them no more. Help with the family, you don't see them no more.' (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

An option for face-to-face delivery of physical and mental health services, education and Centrelink was raised by one participant, although they acknowledged some aspects of these can have an online component. **The only service participants felt should be mostly online were interpreting services, to protect the privacy of women and children**, particularly in small cultural communities, or regional and remote areas.

'Obviously medical services – physical and mental health welfare [should be delivered in person locally], but maybe some of that could be delivered online ... and education and access to education, but possibly some of that could be delivered online via the TAFE and the school ... The client definitely needs access to Centrelink, but that could be online again.' (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

'The only service I would recommend online would be interpreting services [where women can use] pseudonyms to protect their identity, or use interstate interpreters to [further] protect her.' (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

#### 4.4 What should the grant application process require applicants demonstrate to ensure they will meet the needs of victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds for emergency accommodation?

Most frequently, **stakeholders from all groups cited the importance of grant applicants having meaningful links to other services and proving these relationships or partnerships** through a memorandum of understanding or other evidence.

‘Established partnerships [showing an] ongoing relationship. Rather than just a support letter, an MOU, that’s been in place for over 5 years, for example.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘I think the agency needs to show that they have the personnel with the expertise to support people who experience domestic violence, and also they have to show the links with other resources. So they have the resources to link all the relevant services like if they don't have a counsellor in the agency, they can link the client with the agency immediately if the client is at high risk.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

Alongside positive and proven partnerships, stakeholders suggested DSS should prioritise applicants who **show they have connections with and plan to consult with the community they service, who incorporate lived experience in all stages, and are involved in stakeholder activities and forums**. It is particularly important to demonstrate inclusion of lived experience and community connections with women and children who identify as being from First Nations or CALD backgrounds, or women and children with disability, to ensure their needs are listened to, and incorporated in all aspects of the program. For applicants predominantly servicing First Nations women and children, connections and agreements with local Elders groups are also recommended.

‘It would be useful to have a mechanism whereby CALD women with lived experience [can give] input into program development, implementation and evaluation.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘[They should have a] connection with Elders groups. They can’t just say they have a connection. There should be agreements in place with services on how they can work with each other.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Participants considered evidence of **relevant staff training (including trauma-informed practice) and organisational audits** as important indicators to detail in a grant application such as the Safe Places Inclusion Round. Demonstrating an organisation undergoes NDIS auditing is viewed as particularly important in ensuring it can meet the needs of women and children with disability. Other indicators that

should be assessed by DSS include providing a good track record of delivering services, conducting similar programs and presenting referrals from clients.

‘I want to know how well the service vets the staff in terms of that. In our organisation, everyone must have a current police check. Everyone must have a working with children check, working with vulnerable and disadvantaged people check and basically nobody starts employment without those.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

‘I would add the feedback from your client. If you have worked with these women and children for a long time, you would have some great feedback to provide to this fund application... Why they would fund you to serve more women and children in that respect.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

Stakeholders with expertise in working with women and children from First Nations and CALD backgrounds discussed indicators that are particularly important for these cohorts. Critical elements include applicants demonstrating **they work in a way that is culturally safe, with an understanding of intersectionality, and follow safety and inclusion policies.**

‘[Applicants] must ... be culturally appropriate, including to understand the importance of religious and spiritual practices, take into account the trauma-informed, multicultural lens to their practices to ensure that they’re respectful and can provide services which are contextualised to the region and... [understand the make-up] of the region ... to demonstrate they understand the consumers they’re supporting.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

Participants deemed it essential for applicants, particularly those who predominantly work with First Nations women and children, to **demonstrate employment of First Nations staff in their organisation, with identified positions for First Nations women. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations should be prioritised,** along with clear strategic direction that focuses on the specific needs of First Nations women and children. Applicants should have a Reconciliation Action Plan which is demonstrated and proven.

‘Under the Closing the Gap, the target is and the priority is to have Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations deliver to our own people. So that should still be a priority.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

#### 4.5 What should the Grant Application Review Team look out for as red flags that suggest the applicant will not do an adequate job supporting victim-survivor women and children from First Nations, CALD and disability backgrounds in emergency accommodation?

Participants mentioned several red flags that could indicate grant applicants may not adequately support women and children, including:

- no track record of successfully working in the FDV sector
- poor building record
- no meaningful links to services or partnerships
- one mainstream organisation claiming to provide all services
- a high amount of commercial gain to be had from the grant.

‘Look at their building record and whether they can actually provide the materials and a safe structure. Also, if they follow safety procedures with electrical and plumbing ... or have any history of faulty procedures.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘[A red flag would be] If there is an application from a mainstream service, where the service believes it can do it all in-house.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

Participants suggested a red flag (particularly for women and children from CALD and First Nations backgrounds) would be **if organisations do not demonstrate cultural safety in their application, or how they would apply a multicultural lens to their program implementation**. Stakeholders with expertise working with First Nations women and children suggested caution around applicants that cite Aboriginal staff but are not Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

‘There’s also a lot of black cladding going on, which I think we can all speak of. We know what’s been happening. Where there are organisations that are non-Indigenously owned. They may have a couple of Black workers, but then they can claim that they’re part or 50% Aboriginal run ... So, I think it’s making sure they’re 100% Black-owned, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, that are applying for those grants.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

## 4.6 How should DSS manage and support successful grant applicants, in the implementation of their projects?

### 4.6.1 How DSS can support applications

Participants were asked about their previous experience with applying for grants similar to the Safe Places Inclusion Round, including what had worked well, where they had faced challenges, and the ways in which DSS could support them in their application. Some participants had not had experience applying for a grant, but stakeholders across the sector gave clear indications about the kinds of barriers they face, and what DSS could do to help overcome these.

In describing the barriers and challenges in applying for grants, **stakeholders most frequently raised a lack of time to dedicate to design of a program and writing the proposal, and lack of internal expertise in grant writing.** Particularly for an application of this size and scope, many organisations would need to partner with other organisations or services, which adds to the time involved.

‘You have to incorporate the building and need to work together with a builder that has that experience with building community places ... [would you need] different partners in one application... would you have to source a builder?’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘We don’t have grant writers – [we need] ... time to prepare and put good quality submissions in.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

Participants suggested various ways DSS can support applicants during this process. **Most important was providing clear information to applicants – in the form of workshops, forums or feedback on applications.**

‘Forums [in] regards to available grants would be great ... and a specific individual or point of contact [is] always useful too.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘There needs to be workshops in the communities about the tender process and application, so they are aware this is available. They need to offer resources to communities on tender writing. If an organisation is unsuccessful, they should offer feedback.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

Other strategies to support those applying for the grant include:

- additional time to prepare an application
- funding to support application development



- providing an opportunity for an initial proposal or expression of interest, with additional funding to develop further after being shortlisted
- encouraging smaller organisations to apply, and providing the necessary supports
- encouraging partnerships between smaller organisations and larger ones.

‘In the UK in a tender process ... if you have been shortlisted – the candidates would get a reasonable fee to develop the proposal further. The second stage would need to be at least a year in process with a specialist person/project manager to take it forward but with a fee to do this. Small organisations like ours generally will not have capacity or skills to take a building project forward, but could, with a fee, appoint someone with the right skills to manage this.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

‘I understand that larger organisations have the resources to actually pull it off in a timely manner ... But you know, how do we bring in ... some of the other organisations? Whether it is, say, one organisation assisting with the service, or they get on a panel together where ... there's some sort of oversight and actually bringing it together, and then the small organisation actually has the ability to work together and grow at the same time.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

Participants were asked about the feasibility of a 6-month development period for the application. Not all groups responded to this explicitly and there were mixed responses about the appropriateness of this timeframe. Generally, **6-months is deemed sufficient for organisations based in urban centres with more resources, however organisations servicing regional and remote areas may need more time** to develop the proposal, due to the additional barriers that they face (explained in more detail below).

‘I think it’s really good that there is that period because obviously going through council and your local government area can be tricky ... having a 6-month period does allow time to get your proposal forward and then you can have a look at where you want to situate your physical space.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘The planning and development process is huge and slow in regional and remote areas... organisations would need a year at least ... How many houses were they proposing?’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

#### 4.6.2 How DSS can support successful grantees

Participants suggested ways that DSS can manage and support organisations once their application has been successful and they have been awarded a grant. Most significantly, **stakeholders recommend that**

**additional, ongoing or flexible funding is attached to the grant, particularly for organisations servicing regional and remote areas**, which can allow for greater costs in construction or other service provision. This is especially relevant for a program involving construction, which is more expensive and has longer timeframes outside urban centres. Some participants expressed concern about the financial risk of implementing such a program, given the timeframe and the additional services that need to be funded.

‘The fact of the requirements of this accommodation component is that ... you have to take the financial responsibility of the upkeep of the whole premises for the 15 years as well and without any funding for the services itself. This is just capital for the building, and then the service has to take the financial risk, they have to provide the specialist service directly. They have to fund it or get funding for it, and then have to keep the upkeep of the dwelling of the accommodation. There's a lot of financial risk here ... even if they were to go in ... a consortium, there's still major financial risk to any organisation that takes this on...particularly if they don't have a revenue to sustain the accommodation, and fund the service as well.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

‘Providing the accommodation is one thing, to then funding the services to provide the wrap-around supports and the staff to support these families in these new properties is really important ... considering they’re thinking about taking funding away from specialist services at the moment. They’re taking \$2 million away from ACT government and saying states now need to pay for this funding which pays wages for staff to do the support work for these properties.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

Other ways participants suggested DSS could support successful grantees include:

- funding and enabling training for staff, including capacity building around trauma-informed service delivery
- providing connections to partners, such as builders or designers
- allowing grantees autonomy in choosing which contractors to work with
- providing additional support or funding during the transition period, at the beginning stages of the grant funding.

‘Additional supports [are] needed for the transition period, for example, assistance with communication, set-up costs etc. for small organisations.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘I think with other grants in the past they’ve stipulated that if you do get ... funding you’re forced to use a particular builder because the property’s [going to be owned by] a government department and the Department of Infrastructure then that has to build. I think they should

give organisations autonomy on who they choose to build because in these particular parts of the world private builders are more reliable than the actual government.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

#### 4.6.3 Barriers and opportunities for smaller organisations and those servicing regional and remote areas

Smaller organisations, and those servicing regional and remote areas, face particular challenges and opportunities when applying for grants, as well as implementing projects that have been successfully awarded. **The most common challenges for regional and remote organisations cited by focus group participants include the cost of construction, supply of building materials, workforce shortages, and as a result, the time it takes for planning and development.**

‘Say it was \$100,000 for something to be built in the city, that could actually cost \$200,000 in a remote area because of the extra costs involved.’ (Stakeholder, First Nations, Regional/Remote)

‘There are big skills shortages [here]...so projects generally will take longer ... some government projects ... bring people in from interstate. But you have to book ahead.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

Other challenges facing organisations in regional and remote areas include:

- a shortage of viable or appropriate land for development
- a lack of services generally (including housing, transport and health services), which creates compounding issues for women and children experiencing domestic violence, and the organisations that support them.

‘Here ... there is a vastness of land surrounding us, but much of the land is Crown land, so we cannot apply for that land ... It will be very difficult unless the government release some land, or the organisation can repurpose an existing structure.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Regional/Remote)

On the other hand, if there is land available to build on, one focus group participant stated this can be an opportunity for organisations in regional and remote areas, as it allows for buildings to grow organically to meet the needs of the community, which may not be possible in urban centres.

**Participants across the groups cited similar challenges faced by smaller organisations in terms of resources and funding, such as a lack of time and expertise within the team to not only manage projects but also apply for grants.**

‘I think the challenge for a small organisation is just the funding, everyone knows that ... [and] staff capacity, how to keep staff there.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Urban)

However, participants also raised **some opportunities that come with being a smaller organisation, which can be an advantage** in delivering a project such as the Safe Places Inclusion Round. While smaller organisations may not have the breadth of expertise and in-house speciality that some large mainstream organisations have, they generally have specialist expertise in a particular area, such as how to engage appropriately with certain cohorts. Further, strong partnerships with organisations that have expertise in other areas can help bridge that gap.

‘As a specialist DV service that works with women and children ... we have a gendered lens ... so it’s really important that specialist service response is recognised ... because we have that nuanced understanding of intersectionality for women and recognise we have the relationships with mainstream.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

**Participants spoke about the benefits of smaller organisations having strong connections in the community, with more trusting relationships.** When an organisation can provide a longer-term relationship with a woman or child, it creates a sense of stability with the client, increasing the likelihood of meeting their needs.

‘[This grant is] an opportunity for smaller services to grow and provide a really strong response ... we can work with women for up to 2–3 years if [needed] to provide that stability, [so] that it’s not jumping around lots of different services.’ (Stakeholder, CALD, Urban)

‘Some of the smaller organisations ... have standing and status and reputation in the community... There’s a comfort in that because they know the name and they know the brand. Because people in country areas can get a little bit parochial and they see, you know, like a new organisation that comes into town with a bit of scepticism and a bit of hesitancy and engaging in a new organisation.’ (Stakeholder, Disability, Regional/Remote)

## 5. KEY THEMES FOR THE SAFE PLACES INCLUSION ROUND

### 5.1 Overall themes

It is clear from the consultations with sector stakeholders that the overall needs of women and children accessing emergency accommodation are determined by their communities, their individual cultures and backgrounds, and personal preferences. Organisations and communities are at different stages of readiness to be able to apply for a grant of this type. Core themes that emerged for the Inclusion Round were that it should:

- fund the building of emergency accommodation that reflects the unique needs of the women and children in each applicant or grantee's community
- require grant applicants and grantees to consult further with community and with clients, to understand their particular needs, and to document in their application the enablers and barriers to each of the three cohorts accessing the accommodation they propose
- fund the development of emergency accommodation that allows women and children some choice and control in how they live, access services and are supported
- fund or require the provision of wrap-around services to accompany the building of emergency accommodation
- enable the application of small- and medium-sized organisations to the Inclusion Round.

Stakeholders in each group strongly echoed the need for long-term transitional housing options to be available for women and children, after initial emergency accommodation. While it is recognised that the construction of other housing options is not in scope for this grant funding, there may be opportunities to further deepen the connections between the Inclusion Round and a federal response to emergency accommodation, and ultimately further encourage a federal response to other aspects of the housing system, including transitional housing, social housing and more affordable housing generally.

Further detailed themes are listed below.

### 5.2 Themes regarding the physical design, cultural features and location of accommodation

- The grant opportunity should encourage applicant organisations and successful grantees to ensure the emergency accommodation they develop addresses the physical and cultural needs of the women and children they will service, including:

- construction of private dwellings for individual families, rather than shared living spaces or dormitories; however including some communal areas such as gardens or gathering places
  - a mix of 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and larger dwellings to allow for various needs
  - features to ensure the safety of residents, including security features and adequate lighting
  - for CALD women and children: accommodation that includes enough rooms for larger families, separate private kitchens and prayer spaces
  - for First Nations women and children: spaces big enough for larger families, and cultural spaces such as fire pits
  - private separate dwellings catering to women and children with disability, with separate rooms available for a carer, and inclusion of accessible design features throughout.
- The grant opportunity process should ensure that the location of developed emergency accommodation meets the needs of clients, and women and children of CALD, First Nations and disability backgrounds.
- Importantly, accommodation should be central and close to shops and public transport but should be off the main street to ensure privacy and safety for women and children.
  - Accommodation should be in a quiet and safe area.
  - Developments should consider proximity of the accommodation to clients' prior neighbourhoods, children's schools or childcare centres, and other supports and services such as Centrelink and banks.
- The grant opportunity process should encourage grantees to undertake an assessment of the land and its history prior to construction, seeking input from local First Nations Elders.

### 5.3 Themes regarding the supports and services provided alongside emergency accommodation

- In line with the need for wrap-around services while in emergency accommodation, the grant opportunity guidelines should encourage and support organisations to provide the following services in-house or via partnerships, or through proximity and availability to the emergency accommodation:
- a support worker or case manager for each client, available immediately upon arrival at the accommodation and for the duration of their stay, until they transition to other community, social or private-market housing
  - counselling or other mental health support services

- other services including child care, legal and migration services, employment counselling and financial services.
- Language support (including interpreters), spiritual support and culturally safe and competent services should be a priority for CALD women and children, as well as First Nations women and children.
- Wherever possible, women and children should have the option of in-person and remote access for all services. While it is recommended that most services can be accessed in person, some may be delivered online (such as Centrelink), and interpreters should be provided online as a default.

#### 5.4 Themes regarding the assessment of grant applications, and supporting applicants and successful grantees

- When assessing grant applications, organisations should be prioritised where they can demonstrate:
  - a proven track record of working in family and domestic violence
  - a building record that demonstrates their capacity to deliver materials and a safe structure
  - an understanding of the needs of local communities
  - ongoing consultation with local communities so that the perspectives of people with lived experience are incorporated into both the physical dwelling design and any wrap-around support services offered by the grantee
  - evidence of meaningful links, partnerships and relationships with other services and community
  - relevant training of staff and regular organisational audits
  - organisational practices and policies that are culturally safe, with an understanding of intersectionality, and safety and inclusion policies in place.
- The grant assessment process should consider prioritising Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations for any applications that will be largely servicing women and children from First Nations backgrounds. When the applying organisation is not Aboriginal owned, it is critical that the organisation has identified positions for First Nations women.
- Sector stakeholders expressed a clear need for support in applying for a grant such as this, particularly smaller organisations. DSS may explore providing support to all applicants in the form of:
  - information to applicants in the form of workshops, forums or feedback on their applications
  - additional time to prepare the application (more than 6 months is recommended, particularly for smaller organisations)

- funding to support application development
  - an opportunity to submit an initial short proposal or expression of interest, with additional funding to further develop a proposal after being shortlisted.
- DSS should consider providing ongoing support to the organisations that are awarded the Inclusion Round grant in the form of:
- additional, ongoing or flexible funding for capital works and services that are attached to the grant (particularly for organisations servicing regional and remote areas), as well as additional funding in the transition period
  - training and capacity building in grant management for organisational staff
  - facilitating connections to housing development partners (such as builders or designers) but allowing grantees autonomy in choosing contractors.
- We recommend DSS considers how best to encourage and support smaller organisations and those servicing regional and remote areas to apply for and deliver the program through:
- providing additional funding to and allowing for higher grant allocations in some communities to account for the higher costs associated with construction in regional and remote areas
  - providing grant-writing training, forums and support to smaller organisations that may not have in-house capacity
  - encouraging smaller organisations to apply through partnerships with larger organisations, perhaps through additional funding or creating forums that bring small and large organisations together to form consortia.



# APPENDIX 1: RECRUITMENT SCREENER

## Recruitment Specifications:

Six online focus groups of 90 minutes (6-8 per group). Participants should have relevant expertise in the particular cohort for discussion as well as being from a mix of states and territories.

Recruit 9 participants per group, expecting 6-8 to attend.

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3	Focus Group 4	Focus Group 5	Focus Group 6
<b>Geographic expertise</b>	Urban	Regional-remote	Urban	Regional-remote	Urban	Regional-remote
<b>Cohort expertise</b>	Disability	Disability	CALD	CALD	First Nations	First Nations
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories	Mix of states and territories

## Each specialist group will:

- Have expertise working with either First Nations women and children, women and children from CALD backgrounds, and/or women and children who with disability.
- Where possible, participants will also have expertise in family and domestic violence or emergency accommodation/housing.
- A mixture of service providers and advocacy groups.
- For regional-remote groups, have a mix of organisations who service both regional, and remote, areas.

## Exclusions (Please exclude the following people):

- Organisations that do not have a specific mandate for, or expertise in, any of the three cohorts.

## Recruitment Screener

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is **[FULL NAME]** from CIRCA, which stands for the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia. May I please speak with...?

**CONTINUE:** I'm calling to invite you to participate in some research with CIRCA, an independent research company, on behalf of the Department of Social Services. They are conducting consultations with different organisations to help inform the design of the Safe Places Inclusion Round. This is genuine community research to explore your views, opinions, and experiences.

Safe Places is a capital works grant program to build new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving family and domestic violence and provide safe, private places for them to receive holistic support. A new round called the Inclusion Round is being designed and will focus on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

We're looking to hold online focus groups with service providers and advocates who work with people from these backgrounds and those with lived experiences, particularly in relation to housing and family and domestic violence. The focus group will last around 90 minutes, with around 5-7 other people. These discussions are relaxed and informal, and the Department of Social Services will not be in attendance. A de-identified summary of feedback will be sent to the department following the session.

Would you be interested in participating?

**IF YES, CONTINUE:** I just need to ask a few questions to check that you qualify to participate, and because we want to ensure we have a good cross-section of people taking part in the discussions.

Shall we go ahead?

**IF YES, CONTINUE:**

1. Which of the following cohorts do you have expertise in working with/providing services for?
  - a. First Nations peoples
  - b. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
  - c. People with disability
  - d. None of these – TERMINATE
2. Do you have expertise in family and domestic violence or emergency accommodation/housing?

- a. Yes, family and domestic violence
  - b. Yes, emergency accommodation/housing
  - c. Both
  - d. Neither
3. Which of the following best describes what your organisation specialises in?
- a. Advocacy
  - b. Service delivery
  - c. Housing or crisis accommodation
  - d. Other
4. How many employees does your organisation currently have?
- a. 0-19 – SMALL
  - b. 20-199 – MEDIUM
  - c. 200+ - LARGE
5. In which states or territories does your organisation operate? Select as many as applicable.
- a. NSW
  - b. VIC
  - c. ACT
  - d. TAS
  - e. SA
  - f. WA
  - g. NT
6. Which geographic area does your organisation primarily service?
- a. Remote
  - b. Regional

c. Urban

7. Would you give permission for CIRCA to audio-record the discussion, noting that we would not share the audio-recording with anyone outside of CIRCA. The recording will be transferred to CIRCA's computers and will be destroyed after we have made notes and written our issues-based report.

a. Yes

b. No

### Closing – IF Qualified

I am happy to confirm that your organisation has qualified to participate in this research. The online focus group will be running on **[INSERT RELEVANT LOCATION, DATE AND TIME]**. Will you, or someone in your organisation, be able to attend?

#### **IF YES, CONTINUE:**

As mentioned earlier, these discussions are relaxed and informal, and most people enjoy the experience. They last around 90 minutes, with around 5-7 other people. The discussions will be held online and all feedback will be de-identified when returned to the department.

**ASK ALL:** Do you have any accessibility requirements you would like to share with us?

I will send you an email or telephone you to re-confirm your attendance closer to the date. May I have your email address, or would you prefer us to telephone you? **[COLLECT EMAIL / SUITABLE PHONE NUMBERS.]**

Just to recap, my name is **[INSERT NAME]** from CIRCA. This research will be carried out in compliance with the Federal Privacy Act and the information you provide will be kept completely confidential and used for the design of relevant programs by DSS. Thank you for your time today and in anticipation of your participation in this important research study.

### Closing – IF NOT Qualified

I'm very sorry, but you are not eligible to participate in this research. Thank you for your time. Have a nice day.

# APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

30/01/2023

## What is this research about

The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) has been contracted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (the Department) to consult with people who have expertise working with First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women and children with disability. The Department is consulting on the design of the next round of the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation (Safe Places) program, the Inclusion Round, which provides a capital investment to support the building, renovation or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving violence. The Inclusion Round will focus on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children from CALD backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

The Inclusion Round is part of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* (National Plan), with an allocation of \$100 million over 5 years (2022-23 to 2026-27). It builds on the initial investment of \$72.6 million in the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation program.

CIRCA will collate information collected in these focus groups to prepare a Summary Report for the Department. This information will help inform the design of the Inclusion Round.

CIRCA will NOT include your identity and personal details in the report that we make to the Department. The report provided to the Department will be de-identified, and will not be attributed to any specific organisation or individual. CIRCA takes the confidentiality of its interview participants seriously.

## Who is taking part?

As part of this consultation, CIRCA will conduct focus groups with specialist stakeholders working with First Nations women and children, women and children from CALD backgrounds, and women and children with disability. The participants in these focus groups will be organisations and people who have been recommended to us by the Department.

## What does it involve?

Your participation in this consultation will involve a 90-minute online focus group with 5-7 other people.

To make sure that we gather all the points that you make, we will ask for your permission to audio-record the discussion. The audio-recording will not be shared with anyone outside of CIRCA. The recording will be transferred to CIRCA's computers and will be destroyed after we have made notes and written our issues-based report.

### **How long will it take?**

The discussion will take around 90 minutes.

### **Why is it important?**

The National Plan Stakeholder Consultation Final Report identified that existing emergency accommodation is not always appropriate or accessible for particular cohorts, including:

- First Nations women and children
- Women and children living with disability
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and children

The objective of the Inclusion Round is to increase the number of new, appropriate emergency accommodation places for women and children leaving FDV and to increase accessibility for these cohorts, including those who experience the intersection of racism, ableism and sexism.

To achieve these objectives, the Department is consulting with communities. In addition to these focus groups, the Department's consultation includes:

- A Discussion Paper published on [engage.dss.gov.au](https://engage.dss.gov.au) for written submissions from the public from 30 January 2023 to 10 March 2023: <https://engage.dss.gov.au/safe-places-emergency-accommodation-program-inclusion-round/safe-places-emergency-accommodation-program-inclusion-round-program-design-discussion-paper/>
- Dedicated engagement with victim-survivors who have lived experience of emergency accommodation services.

### **Do I have to participate?**

You do not have to participate if you don't want to. Participation in this consultation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no negative impact on your relationship with the Department.

If you have any involvement with the Department, including funding streams, giving your feedback to CIRCA will not jeopardise or prejudice this in any way.

If you don't want to or can't answer any question, we will move on to another question. All comments are welcome – there are no right or wrong answers.

### **Will I be compensated for my time?**

We will provide \$80 by Electronic Funds Transfer [EFT] via your bank details or PayID, to thank you for the time you have taken to participate in the research.

### **How will my personal information be treated?**

Your personal information will remain confidential. Your name/identity will not be used by CIRCA in any written or verbal reports to the Department or anyone else outside of the CIRCA research team. We also ask all focus group participants to not share anything they hear from other participants with anyone outside the focus group.

CIRCA will provide the Department the names of the organisations that are contacted for the focus groups, and which organisations participate. As the Department is facilitating its own separate consultations, this will allow the Department to contact organisations who have not already participated in the CIRCA consultations, and therefore minimise confusion and stakeholder fatigue. Individual names of organisation staff who are contacted and participate will not be shared with the Department. The report provided to the Department will be de-identified, and will not be attributed to any specific organisation or individual.

**Avenue for addressing concerns**

If you have any concerns about the consultation, please raise them with any member of the CIRCA research team in the first instance, and we will be happy to try to address them for you. We can be reached on (02) 8585 1353 or via email: [info@circaresearch.com.au](mailto:info@circaresearch.com.au)

In case of any serious concerns, please contact Lena Etuk, Research & Evaluation Director at CIRCA: (02) 8585 1330, [lena@circaresearch.com.au](mailto:lena@circaresearch.com.au)

***(Participant to keep Participant Information Statement)***

# APPENDIX 3: DISCUSSION GUIDE

30/01/2023

*(To be read aloud to Focus Group participants at start of focus group)*

## **Introduce yourself**

I am from the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) and we are conducting consultation on behalf of the Department of Social Services.

## **The study**

CIRCA has been engaged by the Department of Social Services (the Department) to conduct consultation on the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation (Safe Places) program Inclusion Round. The program provides capital investment to support the building, renovation or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving family and domestic violence. The Inclusion Round will focus on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

The feedback from these focus groups will inform the design of the Inclusion Round.

## **Your participation**

Participation in the focus group is voluntary and there is no requirement to answer every question. You can also choose to withdraw your participation at any time.

If you don't want to or can't answer any question, we will move on to another question. All comments are welcome – there are no right or wrong answers.

If your organisation has any involvement with the Department, including funding streams, giving your feedback to CIRCA will not jeopardise or prejudice this in any way.

## **Confidentiality**

The Department will receive a list of organisations that participated in focus groups, but will not be told the names of those who participate. The report provided to the Department will be de-identified, and will not be attributed to any specific organisation or individual. Your personal information will remain confidential. Your name/identity will never be used by CIRCA in any written or verbal reports to the department or anyone else outside of the CIRCA research team. We also ask all focus group participants to not share anything they hear from other participants with anyone outside this focus group.

## **Audio recording**

To ensure that we capture all the points that you raise, we would like to audio-record the discussion. However, our discussion will be kept confidential. The recording will be transferred on to CIRCA's



computers but will be destroyed once we have made notes and completed an issues-based report. I will ask you in a moment if you consent to recording this conversation.

### **Avenue for addressing concerns**

If you have any concerns about the research, please raise them with any member of the CIRCA research team in the first instance, and we will be happy to try and address them for you. We can be reached on (02) 8585 1353 or via e-mail: [info@circaresearch.com.au](mailto:info@circaresearch.com.au)

In case of any serious concerns, please contact Lena Etuk, Research & Evaluation Director at CIRCA: (02) 8585 1330, [lena@circaresearch.com.au](mailto:lena@circaresearch.com.au)

### **Questions**

Do you have any questions about this focus group? *(If Yes, answer questions)*

[If audio-recording consent for phone or videoconference based interviews or focus groups, include this paragraph:] Now that I've explained the study and answered any questions you had, in a moment I'll ask you if you agree to participate in this focus group discussion. Before I do that though, I'll start the audio recording to document your consent or refusal, and I'll stop the audio recording if you decide not to do the interview or do not wish to be recorded.

### **Record consent**

[If audio-recording consent for phone or videoconference-based interviews or focus groups, include this instruction:] (start the audio-recording)

Do you agree to do this interview?                      Yes/No

[If obtaining written consent, include this instruction:] If yes, have participant(s) sign the consent form. If no, ask participant(s) to leave the focus group or interview.

Are you happy for the interview to be audio-recorded?    Yes/No                      If no, I will take notes.

    If yes, continue recording

    If no, stop recording and take notes instead

### **! Field researcher to check:**

- [In-person] Sign off sheet has been signed by the participants and retained by Researcher
- [Phone or online] Audio-recorded consent obtained from participants
- Participants each have a copy of the Participant Information Sheet
- Participants have received their \$80 incentive

## Specialist sector engagement (Safe Places Inclusion Round) - Discussion guide

*If at any point during the discussion participants want to know about the broader consultation process run by DSS with sector stakeholders, let them know that consultations are happening later in March.*

*They are welcome to directly contact DSS on this email address about it: [SafePlaces@dss.gov.au](mailto:SafePlaces@dss.gov.au)*

*A Discussion Paper linked to the public consultation is also available here: <https://engage.dss.gov.au/safe-places-emergency-accommodation-program-inclusion-round/safe-places-emergency-accommodation-program-inclusion-round-program-design-discussion-paper/>*

OBJECTIVE: Getting to know participants and breaking the ice.

### **1. Let's start by telling each other a bit about ourselves, what we do, what we know about the Safe Places program?**

Brief background on Safe Places Inclusion Round if needed: The Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Safe Places) provides capital works grants to support the renovation, building or purchase of new emergency accommodation for women and children leaving family and domestic violence. The initial round of Safe Places grant funding will deliver 41 projects (of which 9 are currently delivering services) to deliver about 780 new safe places.

This round of the Safe Places program is the Inclusion Round, which will fund up to 720 new safe places to assist women and children leaving family and domestic violence. The Inclusion Round will focus on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

A Discussion Paper about the Inclusion Round has also been [published online](#) for written submissions from the public. We will look at some aspects of this in the group, to get your feedback.

OBJECTIVE: To understand the way accommodation can be constructed to be more universally accessible and appropriate.

### **2. In your experience, what are the physical design features needed within emergency accommodation to support victim-survivor women and children from [First Nations/CALD/disability backgrounds]?**

- a. PROMPT: layout, size of the rooms, number of rooms, number of beds, safety features, location in the community, how near or far it was to shops or places you needed to go, staff, the way access to the building was set up, the way the rooms were laid out, the people who lived nearby, age of the building
- b. Is communal style living more appropriate for some cohorts?

**3. Is the Silver Livable Housing Australia standard appropriate for emergency housing? [if required, show participants Silver Level core design elements]**

- a. Is it too strict/not strict enough?
- b. Is the Silver Standard appropriate for some cohorts but not for others? Which ones?

OBJECTIVE: to understand the kind of wrap around services that should be available to make emergency accommodation safer and more appropriate for the identified groups.

**4. What supports and services do you think victim-survivor women and children from [First Nations/CALD/disability] backgrounds need while they are living in emergency accommodation?**

- a. PROMPT: employment services, legal services, childcare, cultural services, disability support, health services, language support, etc.
  - i. Which of these are most critical for victim-survivors?
  - ii. At what point in time do victim-survivors need these supports and services? For example, just when they move in, or just when facing certain challenges?
  - iii. What services need to be within geographic proximity and what services can be provided remotely?

OBJECTIVE: to build the knowledge of the department's assessment team and select the most appropriate applications.

**5. How can grant applicants best show that they can provide meaningful links to the services/supports that victim-survivor women and children need while living in emergency accommodation?**

**6. What should a grant assessment team look out for as red flags that suggest an application is not appropriate to provide a) emergency accommodation and/or b) services for victim-survivor women and children from a [First Nations/CALD/disability] background?**

- a. Are there essentials (policies/services/procedures) that would cause you concern if they were missing from an application?

OBJECTIVE: to understand how the department can encourage all eligible organisations to apply.

**7. When you have applied for similar grants, what has worked well that could be applied in the Inclusion Round grant application process?**

- a. PROMPT: would any of the grant application requirements outlined in the Discussion Paper be a barrier to your organisation to applying? [*Show grant application requirements*]
- b. PROMPT: In your experience of applying for grants online, what are some of the barriers you have faced – time, expertise (lack of)?
- c. What supports and resources could the department provide to assist organisations when they are applying?
- d. Would the development periods outlined in the Discussion Paper be appropriate for your organisation? Why or why not? [*Show development periods*]

OBJECTIVE: to understand how the department can support all successful organisations throughout the life of the project.

**8. When you have managed similar projects, what has worked well that could be applied in the Inclusion Round (capital works focus preferred)?**

- a. PROMPT: What supports and resources could the department provide to assist successful organisations in managing the project?

**9. (For Regional/Remote focus groups) Are there any additional opportunities and challenges particular to regional and remote areas?**

- a. PROMPT: Are there extra cost factors in construction?
- b. What aspects of service delivery would be different from urban areas?

**10. (For smaller organisations, ACCOs and community organisations) Are there any additional opportunities and challenges particular to smaller organisations, including ACCHOs and community organisations?**

OBJECTIVE: provide an opportunity to give last thoughts or ask questions and wrap up the session.

**11. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add to the things we've discussed today?**

## APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP STIMULUS

### LHA Silver Level Core Design Elements

1. A safe continuous and step free path of travel from the street entrance and / or parking area to a dwelling entrance that is level.
2. At least one, level (step-free) entrance into the dwelling.
3. Internal doors and corridors that facilitate comfortable and unimpeded movement between spaces.
4. A toilet on the ground (or entry) level that provides easy access.
5. A bathroom that contains a hobless shower recess.
6. Reinforced walls around the toilet, shower and bath to support the safe installation of grabrails at a later date.
7. Stairways are designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and also enable future adaptation.

1

### 4.1 Potential eligibility criteria

Potential eligibility criteria for the Inclusion Round may include the following:

- Eligible entity types
  - Company
  - Cooperative
  - Corporate State or Territory Entity
  - Incorporated Association
  - Indigenous Corporation
  - Local Government
  - Statutory Entity
- Ineligible entities include:
  - an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the National Redress Scheme's website on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme' ([www.nationalredress.gov.au](http://www.nationalredress.gov.au)).
  - an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the Workplace Gender Equality Agency non-compliant organisations list ([www.wgea.gov.au](http://www.wgea.gov.au)).
- Proposal provides new (additional) safe places for FDV emergency accommodation, with a "safe place" as defined in section 4.3.2.
- The applicant or partnering services provider is a suitable FDV specialist services provider capable of delivering appropriate FDV specialist services in the state where the project is located.
  - Evidence of capability to deliver appropriate FDV specialist services may be required, such as support from the relevant state government or documentation demonstrating the specialist services provider's service delivery model is consistent with the standards and requirements in the relevant state.
  - Where relevant, this would include evidence of specialist services providers' capability to support First Nations women and children, women and children from a CALD background and women and children with disability or other cohorts.
- Confirmation the applicant and partnering services providers will agree to reporting and evaluation requirements of the department.
- Confirmation of compliance with all relevant Australian Government, state, and local government regulations, including implementation and compliance with the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*. Compliance will need to be evidenced on an annual basis through the designated use period for successful grantees.

2

## 3.1.1. Development Periods

The Government recognises some organisations have viable proposals but may require additional time to develop a high-quality and competitive proposal.

Subject to funding availability, i.e. should there be funding remaining after fully developed grant proposals are assessed, organisations may be awarded additional time to finalise their proposal to be competitive for a full grant through a Development Period of up to 6 months.

This would provide additional time for organisations to obtain planning and development approvals and aims to mitigate implementation risks for delivery timeframes and budgets.

If awarded, Development Period recipients would be invited to apply for a full grant under a targeted competitive capital grant opportunity where their proposal would be assessed as suitable or not suitable.

Any Development Period recipients would not be guaranteed full grant funding to deliver their proposal, prior to their full grant being assessed.

4

## APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

**Table 5: Focus Group 1 (CALD – Regional -remote)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
NT	Service delivery & advocacy	Small	Yes
QLD	Service delivery	Small	Yes
VIC	Advocacy	Medium	Yes
NSW	Advocacy	Medium	No
QLD	Service delivery	Small	Yes
VIC	Advocacy	Medium	Yes

**Table 6: Focus Group 2 (CALD - Urban)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
ACT	Service delivery	Small	Yes
WA	Advocacy	Small	Yes
VIC	Service delivery	Large	Yes
TAS	Service delivery	Medium	Yes
TAS	Service delivery	Large	Yes
QLD	Service delivery	Medium	Yes
SA	Service delivery	Medium	Yes
NSW	Service delivery	Small	Yes

**Table 7: Focus Group 3 (Disability – Regional-remote)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
National	Service delivery, Advocacy	Large	No
NSW	Housing	Large	No
SA	Service delivery	Small	No
SA	Service delivery	Small	No
National	Service delivery	Large	No
ACT	Service delivery, housing	Medium	Yes
SA	Service delivery	Small	No

**Table 8: Focus Group 4 (Disability – Urban)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
National	Service delivery, Advocacy	Large	No
NSW	Housing	Large	No
SA	Service delivery	Small	No
SA	Service delivery	Small	No
National	Service delivery	Large	No
ACT	Service delivery, housing	Medium	Yes
SA	Service delivery	Small	No

**Table 9: Focus Group 5 (First Nations – Regional-remote\*)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
NSW	Service delivery	Medium	Yes
NSW	Advocacy	Medium	Yes
NSW	Advocacy	Medium	Yes
NSW	Service delivery	Large	Yes
NSW	Crisis accommodation	Medium	Yes

**Table 10: Focus Group 6 (First Nations – Regional-remote\*)**

State/territory	Organisation focus	Organisation size	Expertise in FDV
ACT	Service delivery	Medium	Yes
NSW	Advocacy	Medium	Yes
NT	Service delivery	Small	Yes

\*Unable to recruit participants who had expertise in urban areas, so both Focus Group 5 and 6 included stakeholders with expertise in regional-remote areas.





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