**Response to Safe Places Program Design Discussion Paper**

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| Wayss is the largest provider of homelessness, housing and family violence services in the South East Melbourne area. Wayss Family Violence program delivers a range of services in response to women and children experiencing or escaping family violence. They include:* Family Violence Refuge and crisis accommodation
* Transitional supported housing for victim survivors/families
* Rapid Response, including 24/7 after-hours support.
* Specialist Family Violence Case Management
* RAMP Coordination
* Personal Safety Initiative
* Family Violence Housing Pathways- an embedded specialist housing service
* Therapeutic children’s work
* Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS), based at Family Court
* Family Violence/Child Protection Partnership
* The Orange Door, Southern Melbourne area
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Wayss welcomes this further round of the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Inclusion Round) and the opportunity to provide feedback to the discussion paper. Wayss will provide feedback to selected questions in the paper.

**Question 1:** Are the proposed funding amounts of between $500,000 and $8M per project appropriate for the inclusion round?

* The upper level of funding proposed may restrict the size of any new build, but that said, Wayss would recommend low density and smaller scale developments for FDV crisis accommodation.
* Wayss has a commitment to FDV crisis and transitional accommodation facilities that are up to 8-10 units in size to allow for optimal delivery of onsite support services and a normalized, private environment for women and children.
* The significant increase in building costs is a pressure point that may restrict the size of a new build, however there are other viable options such as spot purchasing and renovation to upgrade an existing building that need to be encouraged.
* The budget should allow for passive security measures to be included as a mandatory requirement for projects.

**Question 4:** Will development periods encourage community based FDV service organisations to apply for funding?

* Wayss supports the idea of providing organisations with additional development time in preparing a viable proposal given some applicants may not have the capacity and expertise without sourcing assistance.
* Furthermore, development time may be required to enable the voices of people with lived experience and the relevant community support organisations to be included in the design of the proposed crisis accommodation.
* We recommend there be criteria developed as to where development periods could be made available to submitting organisations and what the process would be for their submissions.

**Question 6:** Are the proposed eligibility and assessment criteria appropriate and able to be demonstrated?

* Wayss recommends better definition of the type of support the specialist FDV service would need to be a provider of, and that the capacity to evidence provision of onsite FDV support and FDV case management for women and children in the crisis accommodation is mandatory.
* Where a generalist FDV service is an applicant, Wayss would recommend that they are able to demonstrate an active service delivery partnership with local First Nations and/ CALD and/ living with a disability specialist organisation and/ that where possible, they have inhouse practice expertise in these areas.

**Question 7:** What additional criteria should be considered?

* Wayss recommends criterion be added to demonstrate the ability to support women and children in crisis accommodation with planning and actioning their exit to longer term, safe and affordable housing.
* As the demand for crisis accommodation is very high the ability to ensure spaces are freed up for women and children needing crisis accommodation when in immediate FDV is essential and that there is a focus on assisting people to move through emergency accommodation in as timely a way as possible.

**Question 8:** Is the proposed designated use period of 15 years appropriate?

* Clarity as to what would happen after 15 years is recommended and whether there would be opportunity to renew the use period beyond this.

**Question 13:** What is the best measure for determining an applicant’s ability to support clients during the emergency accommodation over the designated use period?

* Evidence (data) of previous successful management of emergency accommodation – Refuges, Crisis Accommodation properties, Rooming Houses
* Evidence that clients supported in emergency accommodation have been provided with evidence based FDV case management and focused support with a ‘next step’ housing plan.

**Question 14:** the definitions for ‘emergency accommodation’, a 'safe place’ and a 'specialist service' appropriate?

**Re ‘emergency accommodation’**

* The definition provided is a longer stay than Wayss is accustomed to providing. Emergency or crisis accommodation implies victim survivors are in immediate FDV crisis and that the accommodation is temporary in nature.
* Wayss would encourage a shorter stay in emergency accommodation with a simultaneous focus with clients on their next step- longer term housing option or return home where safe to do so based on a home safety assessment and safety upgrades. This approach is twofold- to give victim survivors choice and agency back in their lives and so as not to

prolong the crisis, trauma and dislocation for all family members and their connection with school, work, friends and community.

**Re 'safe place’**

* Agree with the description of dwellings provided.

Wayss would strongly encourage:

* Appropriate space for accompanying pets to be mandatory in proposals. Our experience is that this can be a key decision-making point for women as to whether or not they will leave violence for emergency accommodation and FDV support.
* Reconsideration of the calculation of number of persons per bedroom as described as this may not be culturally relevant for some clients from CALD backgrounds where larger numbers may wish to share bedrooms. The concept of overcrowding may not be relevant to particular cultural groups and the way they wish to live.
* Include consideration of carers who may need to provide onsite support, including live in, for people living with some forms of disability.

**Re 'specialist service'**

* Definition of specialist service should include ability to provide a face to face service for women and children with preferably the ability to provide a 24/7 response
* Ideally the service should be able to provide specialist support for accompanying children as victim survivors in their own right, preferably with a therapeutic lens.
1. Should the definition of emergency accommodation include longer stays?
* Wayss would not support longer stays beyond the definition provided.
* Wayss position is that the focus and aim of the FDV specialist support work provided is to make the stay as short as safe and reasonable to do so and is on supporting women and children to find safe, stable accommodation where they can be supported with their pathway to recovery.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback and we look forward to the release of the submission round later in the year.

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