

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Ms Trudy Hairs

Organisation Name:
Your position or role:

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Drag the statements below to reorder them. In order of priority, please rank the themes you believe are most important for this inquiry into homelessness to consider::

Family violence, Mental health, Public housing, Housing affordability, Employment, Indigenous people, Rough sleeping, Services

What best describes your interest in our Inquiry? (select all that apply) :

Concerned citizen

Are there any additional themes we should consider?

YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

I write to urge a more creative response to homelessness for women and children through putting vacant habitable State Government buildings (hospitals, aged care homes etc) to better use.

I write as a member of the public who cares about people in crisis. The Government is well aware of the homelessness rate in Victoria and the surge in women who are experiencing homelessness. I will therefore not present this data here. There are many organisations and people better placed to do so.

The former Royal Women's Hospital site (in Carlton) remained empty for 10 years after the hospital's relocation to Parkville. That site could have provided temporary safe haven to many women and children while the future of the building was being finalised. It contained hundreds of en-suite rooms, a dining area and a kitchen. Each floor had office space that could have been used by support staff and security personnel. While it would not have been a permanent housing option, it was always going to be many years before the site was redeveloped and could have provided a stable place for women and their children to stay for months or years while they pursued more durable options.

The upcoming Western General hospital redevelopment offers such an opportunity. It is very likely that the existing site will be vacant for months or years after it is closed down because redevelopment takes a long time to get underway. I urge the State Government to seriously investigate options for this site to be temporarily converted to crisis accommodation in the intervening period between relocation and redevelopment. I am not aware of other habitable buildings that will become vacant, but would think the Western General is not the only one in Victoria.

The risks of such a program are obvious (security, building damage, anonymity). However they are no different to the risks at existing crisis accommodation facilities and I would be surprised if homelessness charities are unable to manage the risks. Funds would need to be allocated to provide additional staffing (resident support workers, security officers) and to maintain the building. The State Government could budget for this and may find that the program brings about savings elsewhere.

The shortage of crisis options for women and their children is well known. Using existing assets more

creatively will make a difference and will show that the Government is genuinely using every opportunity to help people.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

FILE ATTACHMENTS

File1:

File2:

File3:

Signature:

Trudy Hairs