

October 9 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE LEADING ROLE TO PLAY IN PROVIDING SOCIAL HOUSING

Local government has a leadership role to play in expanding the supply of social housing, according to Jocelyn Bignold, the CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women.

She is talking today at *The Future of Inner City Social Housing: Options for Local Government*, an event put on by the Inner Melbourne Action Plan ahead of World Homeless Day (October 10).

Melbourne currently has 55,000 social housing dwellings, far too few to meet the community's current needs.

Ms Bignold says that it is time for local government to use the authority it has in planning.

"We would like local councils to include a percentage of social housing in every new development planned across Victoria."

"We also believe that councils should ensure that developers include infrastructure – schools, community hubs, which encourage social inclusion rather than isolation," she added.

"These steps are part of local government's responsibility, it is as simple as that."

McAuley Community Services for Women says the lack of social and affordable housing was worrying for everyone, but for women and children who are escaping family violence it was especially worrying because their choices are limited.

"Do they stay in an unsafe situation? Do they move out to a motel which is expensive? Do they come to a crisis centre or refuge where they are technically homeless?"

McAuley Community Services for Women supports women and their children who are escaping family violence, and for women who are homeless. It runs Victoria's only accessible 24/7 safe house, a refuge program and provides accommodation and support services.

Next year – with an \$11million investment from the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy – McAuley Community Services for Women will open Victoria's first purpose built accommodation for 25 women who otherwise would be homeless. The site in Footscray will pioneer programs sensitive to women's specific needs. These will include education and employment, health, social and recreation programs.

Media inquiries: Penny Underwood on (03) 9818 8540.