

[Refurbished facilities and funding for new units locked in for Hobart Women's Shelter - ABC News](#)

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22 April 2026



A Hobart-based shelter has locked in funding to almost double its capacity for women and children in need of safe housing. (ABC News: Jake Grant)

**In short:**

Hobart Women's Shelter has upgraded its communal spaces and locked in funding to almost double its capacity for women and children in need of safe housing.

The service has faced considerable over-demand, turning away 822 applicants last year.

**What's next?**

With funding now secure for 15 new two-bedroom on-site units, the shelter says construction could begin in the next few months.

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Upgraded facilities and services based on a trauma-informed approach have "transformed" a Tasmanian women's shelter, backed in by state and federal funding.

The upgrades are badly needed, with the Hobart Women's Shelter turning away eight in 10 women who seek their services due to lack of capacity.



The Hobart Women's Shelter says the upgrades have 'transformed' the shelter. (ABC News: Jake Grant)

The demand is not unique to the state, with part of the funding — over \$3 million, coming from the Commonwealth's \$1.2 billion investment in crisis and transitional housing to address shortages nationwide.

The Tasmanian government has sprung its own \$50 million investment through Homes Tasmania to support homelessness and crisis care, but as the state budget approaches, some are urging for further commitments.



Janet Saunders is the chief executive of Hobart Women's Shelter. (ABC News: Ebony ten Broeke)

However, amid the surging demand for services, the upgrades are a welcome relief for the Hobart-based shelter.

**"The number one reason why women won't leave a violent relationship is because of their concern around having a home and somewhere safe to go," shelter chief executive Janet Saunders said.**

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Last year, the service had to turn away more than 800 women due to capacity constraints. *(ABC News: Jake Grant)*

The shelter offers accommodation and support services for women and children impacted by family violence.

Last year, it turned away 822 applicants due to a lack of space.

But the renovations, supported by the Tasmanian Community Fund and built with trauma-informed design principles, have changed how the facility responds to the needs of those seeking safe accommodation.

New facilities include an activities space, recreation space, therapy room, and an outdoor play area.



The upgrades include an outdoor play area, as well as recreation spaces. (ABC News: Jake Grant)

Ms Saunders said residents will have 24/7 access to family support workers, and can more easily access family violence counselling and legal support on-site.

"We have transformed the shelter quite a bit," she said.

**"We've really been thinking about how we can provide wraparound support."**

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## **Bottleneck as families wait for social housing**

The site has 15 stand-alone apartments, and currently has capacity for 15 women and 54 children.

But the shelter can't meet the demand — [a trend it has grappled with for years.](#)

Ms Saunders said women and children generally stay for 13 weeks, but that number has grown.

Some families stay for 12 months, she said, and with most families waiting for social housing, it's created a bottleneck.

### Domestic violence shelters turning women away



In desperate search of a safe space, 1,182 women and children called the Hobart Women's Shelter last financial year — 943 of them were turned away.



Housing challenges are being felt right across the state. (ABC News: Kate Nickels)

The funding — \$3.08 million federally and \$6 million from state-run Homes Tasmania — has locked in a further 15 two-bedroom units, and will almost double the shelter's total capacity, a considerable expansion to crisis accommodation in the region, Ms Saunders said.

But it's been a slow process to get there.

The 15 new two-bedroom units were first planned over a year ago, and were initially intended to be built off-site.

The units have since shifted to on-site and have been redesigned, resulting in a delay in planning approvals.



Housing minister Kerry Vincent says the government is working to address housing challenges. (ABC News: Ebony ten Broeke)

Tasmanian Housing Minister Kerry Vincent acknowledged the process to build new units could be slow and there was high demand for services statewide, but said the government was working with providers to help address the issues.

"It takes time for these things to happen," he said.

### **"We don't have a magic wand."**

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Despite the delay, the refurbished facilities are a significant achievement, according to Engender Equality chief executive Alina Thomas.

With improved infrastructure in southern Tasmania, Ms Thomas said it was important similar investments in women's shelters operating in the north and north west were made.

"It is also critical to ensure that all victim-survivors of family violence can access timely, specialist support," she said.

## Funding commitments lagging, report finds

Last May, the Australian government determined Tasmania had some of the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in the nation, surpassing the national average.

A more recent study has found the state's funding commitments are also lagging.

Gender Budget Watch monitors government expenditure related to women, gender equality, and gendered violence prevention.

Its reporting comes with an important caveat — it only measures formal women or gender budget statements — but the researchers said the figures are useful as an indicative overview of state spending.

It found in Tasmania's 2025-26 budget, which did not produce a women's budget statement, investment fell from 5.4 per cent to 0.9 per cent, the second worst in the nation.

### Call for 'collective action' to address gendered violence in Tasmania



A new platform is centred on making small, actionable pledges to help people overcome the overwhelming statistics on gendered violence, which often lead to inaction.



Independent Member for Nelson Meg Webb says she wants to see stronger commitments to address gender-based and family violence in the upcoming state budget. (ABC News: Kate Nickels)

With the next Tasmanian budget to be handed down in May, Independent MLC for Nelson, Meg Webb, said she wanted to see stronger commitments to address gender-based and family violence locked in.

The upper house member said the bare minimum she wanted was the removal of efficiency cuts in the budget for all recurrent domestic and family violence services.

Practical assistance to ensure service providers weren't forced to cut services due to escalating travel and fuel costs was also on Ms Webb's list, as well as investment in mandatory trauma-informed training for first responders.

**"There is definitely a danger of bricks and mortar being prioritised over people," Ms Webb said.**

"Buildings may provide physical shelter, but of equal importance is the human connection, heart, and wrap-around care required to assist victims-survivors."

Asked if more money would be allocated in the budget to ease pressure on gender violence services, Mr Vincent said he was communicating with various sectors about their funding requirements.

**Caught in a violent relationship, Cody's choice was 'either stay or be on the street'**



Tasmania is in the throes of a housing crisis, and women and children are particularly vulnerable, according to a recent report.