

SUBMISSION TO THE
QUEENSLAND
REVIEW OF
CHARTER OF
VICTIMS' RIGHTS



FOREWORD

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Queensland Government's call for submissions on the review of the Charter of Victim's Rights.

This submission has been prepared by members of the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Hub (MGFVPH). More details about MGFVPH and our current related research are provided in section one of the submission.

Please find our submission attached to this letter.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss any aspects of this submission or our wider research.

Kind regards,

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THE SUBMISSION

The Queensland Government’s review of the Charter of Victim’s Rights (hereafter, the Charter) represents a significant opportunity to address key issues and propose potential reforms to the system. We commend the work being done in this area and look forward to reading the Queensland Victims’ Commissioner’s recommendations.

This submission draws on research relating to the system-level responses in cases of domestic and family violence (DFV). There are currently constraints on agencies in securing safe, long-term accommodation for victim-survivors amidst the current rental and cost of living crisis. This raises particular concerns about whether agencies are able to uphold their obligations under the Charter. This submission is structured to chronologically address questions 4, 10, and 19 of the consultation’s *Main paper - Let’s talk victims’ rights* document. These are questions that align with the authors’ areas of expertise. Given the complex intersections between DFV and housing precarity, the authors have provided background information to support the recommendations being made in response to the above questions.

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WHO WE ARE

The Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Hub (MGFVPH) is at the forefront of research and education dedicated to preventing gender-based violence. Our approach is evidence-based, interdisciplinary, applied, practical, and collaborative, delivering tangible impact for policymakers, practitioners, and communities. MGFVPH unites researchers from a wide range of disciplines across Monash University in a collaborative mission to achieve the transformative social change necessary to end gender-based violence. We provide a robust evidence base that drives policy reform, enhances protections and support for people experiencing violence, and directly confronts the cultural and economic drivers that perpetuate it. Through our work, we bridge the gap between research and action, ensuring that evidence translates into meaningful change for those most affected.

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Chantelle Langdon is a PhD candidate based within the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Hub. She is completing her PhD within the discipline of Criminology and is supervised by Drs Kate Burns and Naomi Pfitzner. Chantelle has professional experience working as a Social Worker in the crisis homelessness sector in Victoria, and is researching the barriers that prevent victim-survivors from accessing long-term accommodation after fleeing violent relationships. Her research aims to understand the ways in which structural barriers and shortfalls in policy frameworks are impacting the ability for service providers to provide accommodation for victim-survivors, and how this can culminate in the return of a victim-survivor to an abusive partner because of the lack of alternative housing options. Chantelle's research is based within Victoria, a state with similarly high service level demand to Queensland, which offers an opportunity to share insights from the Victorian perspective on agency obligations under the Charter.

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Isabel Dunn is a PhD candidate in Criminology at the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Hub, supervised by Dr.s Ellen Cho, Kathryn Benier and Sara Niner. She has worked in front-line support services, in both Australia and Indonesia. Isabel's current research focuses on how women from migrant backgrounds who have experienced DFV, are supported by local services in Tasmania. Her study aims to understand how professionals and practitioners perceive the impacts of DFV on women's day-to-day lives, including how they navigate formal services, informal networks, and community support, as well as the barriers they identify to effective access. Isabel is also interested in how organisations assess the accessibility, cultural appropriateness, and overall effectiveness of current systems of support. Tasmania, like Queensland and Victoria, is facing a housing crisis that uniquely impacts those who have experienced DFV, meaning Isabel similarly offers an important perspective when looking at state-based responses aimed at supporting victims.

BACKGROUND: VICTIM-SURVIVORS AND HOUSING IN AUSTRALIA

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia (AHURI 2022). There is a clear correlation between experiencing violence and experiencing housing insecurity (Diette and Ribar 2018; Australian Government 2021). Research has revealed that securing alternative accommodation is one of, if not the, key barrier to leaving an abusive relationship and that the risks encountered in unsafe crisis accommodation can be described as ‘added abuse’ (Ragusa 2017: 284). Stable housing has been identified as one of the most important tangible resources for victim-survivors’ recovery, and a key mitigating factor in reducing the risk of further violence post-separation (Baker et al. 2010: 431, Chiaramonte et al. 2022). The *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* identifies unaffordable or insecure housing as a critical factor in decisions to leave an abusive partner, as women and children exiting crisis accommodation after initially fleeing violence may be forced to return to a violent household or risk becoming homeless (Commonwealth of Australia 2022; Flanagan et al. 2019). Based on 2016 data from the ABS Personal Safety Survey, it was estimated that as many as 7,690 women a year return to perpetrators due to having nowhere affordable to live (Equity Economics 2021). This number has continued to increase and the most recent data from 2024 suggests this number is now closer to 13,000 (Homelessness Australia 2024). In this submission we argue that structural pressures impacting housing access and affordability limit the ability of victim-survivors to safely leave abusive relationships. Given the consultation paper identifies that ‘supporting victims to heal and recover from their experience’ is a key factor to upholding Charter rights, ensuring a victim-survivor is safely housed should be the first reasonable step before other supports are explored, such as legal recourse or compensation options.

Ensuring the safety of DFV victim-survivors is especially important given the risk of victims being unable to access, or disengaging from, support due to not having stable accommodation. A recent report from the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP 2025) flagged that victim-survivors are being ‘ping-ponged’ between DFV and homelessness services, with up to 20% of clients receiving no crisis bed at all. Queensland in particular is observing an exponential increase in demand for crisis accommodation due to record low rates of rental affordability, especially for low income earners (Anglicare 2025; Griffiths 2025). This is alongside a record high demand for social housing, where the average wait time is two and a half years and is disproportionately impacting women and children (Marie and Taylor 2025). Such shortages are also having a profound impact on Indigenous women and temporary migrants escaping DFV, who face increased barriers due to discrimination from housing providers, and being unable to access income support, respectively (Meyer and Stambe 2021; Thomas and Segrave 2018). Therefore, shortages in crisis accommodation, and a lack of coordination between DFV and homelessness services in Queensland, can impede a victim-survivor’s right to safety and recovery under the Charter.

Housing is an essential component of recovery and healing for victim-survivors of DFV as it is seen as ‘a woman’s opportunity to step out of past traumas and violence and to imagine and build a future’ (Natalier et al. 2025: 295). We encourage the Queensland Office of the Victims’ Commissioner to take this into consideration when making amendments to the obligations of

agencies in upholding the Charter. We recommend that the Commissioner expands the range of agencies obligated to uphold the Charter to include housing and homelessness services, and other non-government agencies, such as accommodation providers working with victim-survivors of DFV. Without multi-agency coordination between DFV and homelessness services the chance of an inconsistent response being offered to those impacted by DFV is heightened, as they may be placed in unsafe environments that are not conducive to their healing and recovery. We recommend that in tandem with changes to the Victims' Rights Charter, more funding and resources should be provided to DFV and homelessness service providers to support them to uphold their obligations under the Victims' Charter. This would ensure that victim-survivors are not just removed from an initial crisis situation, but are also supported to remain in safe, affordable accommodation in the long-term to foster recovery and healing. Specifically, we recommend the funding of specialist navigation support for victim-survivors experiencing housing precarity and consistent referral pathways for long-term accommodation to ensure that other actors bound by the Charter, such as the police, courts, and victim support services, are similarly able to meet their obligations under the Charter.

OUR RESPONSE TO KEY QUESTIONS FROM THE MAIN PAPER

4. What support or resources would help improve awareness in non-government organisations?

Based on the above discussion, we believe that upholding a victim-survivor's right to heal and recover from experiences of DFV is tantamount. The ability for non-government organisations to uphold victim-survivors' rights is therefore dependent on access to adequate resources and funding. It is not just an awareness of Charter's rights that is important, but the ability to provide an adequate and dignified housing response to victim-survivors reaching out for support. As argued by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce (2022: 101) 'the threat of homelessness poses an additional barrier [to reporting] for victims who have been sexually abused or assaulted by an intimate partner or family member'. By ensuring clearer Charter-obligated housing pathways for victim-survivors, this could help mitigate concerns around initial reporting of violence and allow for more victim-survivors to access necessary support. Therefore, we argue that expanding the agencies obligated under the Charter to include non-government housing organisations is a necessity. This can create a greater imperative for homelessness service providers to be adequately resourced in order to have the ability to offer dignified accommodation options to victim-survivors. By doing so, awareness of obligations under the Charter improves, as the importance of safe housing is asserted as an integral protective factor.

DFV services, which are currently obligated under the Charter, are facing significant increases in service demand (Griffiths 2025). This means victim-survivors may not be able to access refuges and/or appropriate accommodation and are subsequently referred onto generalised homelessness services for support, such as those run through non-government organisations (Flatau et al. 2015: 8). However, like DFV services, housing and homelessness services have similarly reported unprecedented demand across several states (Thorne 2025), including Queensland, where increasing numbers of people are being turned away, including vulnerable women and children. Given the housing and homelessness sector is under-resourced and under-funded, there are increasing numbers of victim-survivors of DFV who are referred to these services but don't receive an adequate housing response (CHP 2025). This undermines the overall aims of the Charter and the agency obligations enshrined within it, given that the protections and rights offered to victim-survivors accessing DFV services are not also embedded within other non-government accommodation services being accessed. Non-government organisations, such as housing and homelessness service providers, understand the impact of substandard accommodation on vulnerable people trying to access support (CHP 2025). However despite this awareness, these services don't currently have the funds or resources to adequately uphold Charter obligations nor to ensure the healing and recovery of women affected by DFV.

While we believe that non-government organisations providing housing or accommodation support to victim-survivors of DFV should be obligated under the Charter of Victims' Rights, this cannot be adequately achieved without better funding for non-government organisations. Doing so is integral for victim-survivors' recovery from DFV as it can allow for better collaborations between services

who are already obligated under the Charter, such as the police, courts, and other arms of the criminal justice system (DVConnect 2023; Social Ventures Australia 2021). Better collaborations between services can allow for an appropriate response to be offered to victim-survivors, and can create awareness across services regarding the importance of housing support as a pathway for recovery.

10. Would specifying which Queensland Government services must uphold particular Charter rights make their responsibilities clearer? If yes, how could this be done simply?

Queensland Government services providing housing and accommodation support should be obligated and specified under the Charter. Similar to non-government organisations, if government services that are obligated under the Charter aren't specified, then they are constrained in their ability to access the resources and funding needed to ensure victim-survivor recovery. Therefore, specifying which services must uphold particular Charter rights could ensure their responsibilities are clear and that a consistent response can be given to victim-survivors. This would also make it easier for non-government organisations and government services to understand each other's responsibilities and therefore collaborate more effectively (Social Ventures Australia 2021). Not doing so, as flagged earlier, can have a significant impact on other agencies and their abilities to uphold Charter obligations.

For example, if a victim-survivor is undergoing court proceedings but doesn't have a stable address and contact details, there are significant risks undermining their ability to engage. This can include missing information regarding legal notifications, the status of IVOs, and, at worst, can lead to disengagement from proceedings altogether (Justice Connect 2018). Without more consistent specification of government and non-government agencies' obligations under the Charter, services aren't able to understand their roles in the wider system. This can lead to sub-par responses from agencies which can have flow-on effects for the ability of other services to support victim-survivors of DFV. By specifying which Queensland Government housing services must uphold the rights of the Charter, their responsibilities within the wider service system is made clearer. The Charter could include a schedule or guidance document that clearly identifies which Queensland Government services are responsible for upholding particular rights, including housing and accommodation services, with concise descriptions of how those obligations should be implemented in practice.

19. What new or creative ideas could make the Charter of Victims' Rights work better in practice?

As outlined above, it's clear that in order to ensure that the Charter of Victims' Rights works most effectively, government and non-government housing services must be clearly obligated under the Charter. This would allow these services to be adequately resourced to provide victim-survivors with the safeguards needed for effective healing and recovery. Long-term housing can support the overall aims of the Charter as safe accommodation is conducive to the recovery and healing of victim-survivors, as prioritised by the Charter. Additionally, the right to housing is enshrined within article 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (The United

Nations 1966), to which Australia is signatory, therefore such rights should be similarly reflected in other Charters concerning the rights of victims in Australia.

We acknowledge that there are structural barriers that need to be addressed in tandem with any of the recommended changes. For example, there remains a need for additional skilled workers employed as ‘system navigators’ to assist victim-survivors to traverse what are very complex, fragmented service systems, and endeavour to help them find stable accommodation so that other avenues of justice can be pursued (Social Ventures Australia 2021). Since the Victorian 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence, there have been calls to develop a system navigator for victim-survivors and for more integrated service responses to ensure victim-survivor safety (The Victorian Government 2016). This was similarly flagged in more recent submissions to Queensland’s 2023 Inquiry into Support Provided to Victims of Crime, where agencies such as the Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC) asserted that ‘the needs of victims can only be met within an integrated system that puts victims at the centre’ (Queensland Parliamentary Committee 2023: 4). Employing specialist system navigators is one way to address current structural constraints.

Putting victim-survivors at the centre of reforms, such as that detailed above, requires considering the nature of DFV as a ‘wicked problem’ that intersects with multiple domains and therefore warrants responses from a multitude of services (Walklate 2025). In considering the complex nature of DFV, we argue that the multiple intersections of these victimisation experiences need to be considered in agency responses. This includes addressing barriers such as geographic isolation or displacement, and understanding the needs of additionally marginalised victim-survivors, such as Indigenous women and those who are refugees or migrants. As flagged earlier, Indigenous women face disproportionate discrimination from private housing providers and are also more likely to reside in rural and regional areas where available resources may be lacking (Meyer and Stambe 2021). Temporary migrants and refugee women escaping DFV also face significant barriers in accessing accommodation support due to ineligibility for government payments and potential lack of working rights in Australia (Murray et al. 2019). Therefore, we also argue for the need to consider these intersections when upholding Charter rights, as failing to accommodate victim-survivors in safe, stable accommodation may lead to them returning to a perpetrator and/or being at greater risk of further harm in hotels and rooming houses (Equity Economics 2021; Ragusa 2017; Tenants Victoria 2022). Better housing responses for victim-survivors of DFV must take into account victim-survivors from metropolitan, regional and rural areas of Queensland.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure non-government and government agencies providing housing and/or accommodation support for victim-survivors are obligated to uphold the Charter of Victims’ Rights.
2. Ensure that services obligated under the Charter of Victims’ Rights to provide housing responses to victim-survivors are adequately funded and resourced to uphold their obligations for the healing and recovery of victim-survivors.

In summary, ensuring that both government and non-government organisations providing housing and accommodation support to victim-survivors are obligated under the Charter of Victims' Rights would strengthen the consistency, accountability, and effectiveness of the service system. Clear obligations across services would support a coordinated response, enabling agencies to better understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting victim-survivors through their recovery and engagement with the justice system. However, these obligations must be accompanied by adequate funding and resourcing to ensure that services are able to meaningfully uphold the rights outlined in the Charter. Doing so would help ensure that victim-survivors receive trauma-informed housing support that enables their safety, healing, and continued participation in justice processes.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute our knowledge and look forward to seeing the outcomes of this review.

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