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State’s peak body welcomes investment to provide housing and support for older women

Q Shelter, Queensland’s peak representative for the homelessness and housing sector, has welcomed new initiatives announced today that respond to the growing demand for specialist housing and homelessness responses for older women.

Women across Australia aged 55 and over are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people, increasing by 31% between 2011 and 2016.

Fiona Caniglia, Q Shelter’s Executive Director, commended the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, Minister for Communities and Housing, the Digital Economy, and Arts, for following through on commitments made in the 2021-2025 Housing and Homelessness Action plan so quickly.

“This announcement recognises the urgency of the situation, and we are pleased to see it coming so soon, just eight months after the 2021-2025 Homelessness and Housing Action Plan,” said Ms Caniglia.

Q Shelter has worked closely with the Department and the Housing Older Women Movement (HOW M)—a group of women with lived experience of housing insecurity and their supporters—to change public policy regarding housing options for older Queenslanders.

“This funding means that more older women will be able to live in their forever home,” said Ms Caniglia.

The announcement today is based on four pillars recommended by Q Shelter and the HOW M to the Department over the past six months, including a new advisory and monitoring group, a housing hub with specialist support services, planning reform, and co-designed housing growth projects.

Maggie Shambrook, spokesperson from HOW M said that the Minister’s announcement will help address the urgent and growing needs of older women for safe, secure, and affordable housing that enables them to age in place in their communities.





“We are very appreciative that the Minister has heard our voice. These important initiatives have been designed with, and for, older persons in Queensland,” said Ms Shambrook.

Founded in 2019, the Housing Older Women Movement also includes smaller developers, Sharing with Friends and Win Housing, who have been creating bespoke models of housing for older women.

Over 300,000, or 44% of single women over 45, are on low-medium incomes, do not own their own homes, and are renting.

This, combined with the rising costs of private rental and inadequate income support payments have created a “perfect storm” where older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness, Ms Caniglia said.

In 2019-2020, approximately 13, 420 women over 55 years of age sought help from specialist homelessness services in Queensland.

Q Shelter and the HOW M warn that this number does not include many more ‘invisible’ women who are experiencing acute housing stress or living in unsecure and inadequate housing.

A dedicated advisory group will help address this challenge, Ms Caniglia said, and help ensure support for older women in regional areas is available.

“We look forward to continuing our work with the Department who is taking a lead in Australia to address this social justice issue aimed at achieving vital housing outcomes with and for older women in Queensland,” Ms Shambrook said.

Learn more about the [Housing Older Women Initiative](#).

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