

Emergency accommodation offers hope

Ben Loughran

"THIS is what meaningful collaboration looks like.

"When government, community housing, and the family violence sector work together in a meaningful way, women, children and young people have a stronger foundation for healing and recovery."

That's the message from women's refuge Annie North chief executive Michelle Crawford at the official opening of three new social housing units in Bendigo on Thursday, May 21.

For Bendigo women and children caught between the "impossible choices" of domestic violence or homelessness, the Safe Places Development is there to help.

The properties are three-bedroom homes and will be fully furnished before renters move in.

The project was a joint development between Haven Home Safe, women's refuge organisation Annie North, the Centre for Non-Violence and the federal government, which provided \$2.5 million to the project.



Centre for Non-Violence Head of Business Development and Advocacy Clare Shamier, Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters MP, Haven Home Safe CEO Trudi Ray, Annie North CEO Michelle Crawford. Picture supplied

"At Annie North we know first hand that too many women, children and young people are still facing impossible choices between violence, homelessness and insecurity," Ms Crawford said.

"Projects like this show what is possible when true partnerships focus on an investment in safety, dignity

and long-term recovery."

Haven Home Safe, Annie North and the Centre for Non-Violence will work together to allocate the homes and support residents.

Haven Home Safe chief executive Trudi Ray said the homes would be fitted out to help its new tenants.

Ms Ray said they were

designed with "care and consideration".

"It is important to Haven Home Safe that there are affordable and accessible housing options for women and children escaping family violence in regional cities and towns," she said.

"These are beautiful, high-quality homes that have

been designed with care and consideration for the needs of renters.

"Each home has 7-star energy rating, solar collection, rainwater tanks as well as energy efficient heating, cooling and hot water, meaning that renters will have reduced household bills and less financial stress."

Ms Crawford said safe, accessible housing was "the foundation" women and children fleeing family violence could start again from.

"For the women, children and young people that Annie North supports, the development of these beautiful properties means safety, dignity and the opportunity to move from crisis toward stability and independence," she said.

Ms Crawford said the collaboration between the various stakeholders allowed this project to come to fruition.

Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters said these new homes would offer a new beginning for those affected by family violence.

"I would like to congratulate these amazing local organisations for their commitment and collaboration on this vital project," she said.

■ Lifeline, 13 11 14; Centre for Non-Violence (Monday-Friday, business hours) 1800 884 292; Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria, 5441 0430 9am-5pm; Sexual Assault Crisis Line, 1800 806 292.