

Ngaruk Willam

Reimagining connection to culture and Country in urban housing

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) welcomed renters to their new homes in Dandenong, Boonwurrung Country in early 2023.

The 10 apartments are for Aboriginal Victorians on the Victorian Housing Register, the Victorian social housing waitlist. The project was funded by the Victorian Government's Building Works package.

The apartments have been designed to help create community connections and be flexible enough to accommodate a range of renters over their lifespan, including young professionals, couples and small families.

Most importantly, the apartments have been specifically designed for Aboriginal renters, and reflect AHV's Indigenous design principles.

Indigenous architect James Gilliland and Indigenous landscape designer Charles Solomon worked closely with AHV's Nicky McNamara to create homes that reflect Aboriginal culture and connection to Country. Gilliland drew design inspiration from the culture and Country of the Ngaruk Willam people, one of the five clans of the Boonwurrung Nation.



Apartment exterior

“These are the first medium density apartments developed specifically for Aboriginal tenants” – Darren Smith, CEO, Aboriginal Housing Victoria

The landscape, which features plants selected for their symbolic meanings and traditional uses in medicine and tools, can be used by residents as a cultural learning tool. It also provides a beautiful shared space.

Another key feature of the development is a larger two-bedroom Elder residence near the front entrance. Elders are highly respected in the Aboriginal community. Positioning their home near the ground floor entrance means they have the opportunity to welcome people and be a first point of contact when visitors arrive. The Elder residence also provides space for family or friends to stay, and a large enough kitchen-dining area to have a cuppa and a yarn.

Some residents were initially apprehensive about apartment living, but were won over by the unique design, especially the centrality of Indigenous landscaping and connection to outdoor space.



Apartment interior

About Aboriginal Housing Victoria

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is an Aboriginal community organisation managing over 1,600 rental properties for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. Through the provision of secure housing by an Aboriginal landlord, AHV helps strengthen and maintain Aboriginal communities and cultural ties. AHV is also the lead agency for Victoria's Aboriginal housing and homelessness policy, Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, and helps secure resources and reforms to implement the policy.

AHV helps strengthen and maintain Aboriginal communities and cultural ties through renter support services and community events such as the annual NAIDOC Family Day at the Farm.



AHV's 2023 NAIDOC Family Day at the Farm. Photo by Bernard Wright Photography.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Umarkoo Wayi – Ganbu Guljin

14 well connected homes to strengthen Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) welcomed renters to their new homes in Reservoir, Wurundjeri Country in 2023.

Residents are connected to good amenity, with the homes located near Aboriginal Community Services, public transport, and job opportunities.

The 14 one- and two-bedroom apartments are for Aboriginal Victorians on the Victorian

Housing Register, the Victorian social housing waitlist.

The homes were designed by Breathe Architects, with sustainability at the forefront. Where possible natural renewable materials such as timber and cork were used. The all-electric building has an 8.2 NatHERS rating and features solar panels and high efficiency fixtures, befitting the planet and residents.





Indigenous artist Tahnee Edwards was integral with her colourful murals, bunjils and engravings.

About Aboriginal Housing Victoria

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is an Aboriginal community organisation managing nearly 2,000 rental properties for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

Through the provision of secure housing by an Aboriginal landlord, AHV helps strengthen and maintain Aboriginal communities and cultural ties. Aboriginal communities are further strengthened through AHV's renter support services and community events such as the annual NAIDOC Family Day.

"Aboriginal Housing Victoria's drive to support the self-determination of First Nations People in Australia through development and management of affordable housing projects is extraordinarily fulfilling to be a part of." – Faith Freeman, Breathe Architect

All photos by Andrew Wuttke

Aboriginal Housing Victoria is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

New Epping

Social and affordable homes forging strong community connections

Haven Home Safe, in partnership with Homes Victoria, Riverlee, Hacer, MGS Architects and City of Whittlesea, welcomed residents to 151 new social and affordable homes in early 2023. These quality homes on Wurundjeri Country are part of Stage 1 of New Epping; an urban regeneration and mixed-use precinct 18km north of Melbourne CBD.

Many residents have local ties to the area – such as families with children in local schools – and key workers who have struggled to afford private rental accommodation.

Part of Haven Home Safe's approach to building strong communities is the inclusion of a placemaking strategy, developed in partnership with Village Well. This approach guides residents to become a community of neighbours who take pride in their homes, care for one another, and actively engage with

the wider community. Informed through extensive consultation with the local community and stakeholders, the placemaking framework helps to design customer-centric processes for the expression of interest allocations, and moving in stages and beyond to ensure thriving tenancies.

A dedicated Community Place Manager is also integral to the approach, providing residents with a trusted and welcoming on-site presence, helping people as they move in and navigate this new beginning. The Community Place Manager connects residents with local services such as employment services and the local library; and is responsible for planning and facilitating community building events. This commenced with a regular afternoon tea event that helped people to meet their neighbours and make community connections.



Communal outdoor space

Rex was one of the first residents to move in, and as a compassionate and caring disability advocate, he is looking to the future and thinking about re-joining the workforce. He has already been an active member of the community, attending local events with his neighbours.

“I absolutely love it (living here), it is just great, very easy to get around, people are nice and the community around me makes such a difference.”

I love it here; you can't make a place without a community and the community is so nice here. Also, it's so close to the shops and it is very easy to get around. I have a lot of my friends who live in the area and often visit me so that's nice – Rex, Haven Home Safe renter at New Epping

The 151 apartments are located across three buildings and comprise 78 one-bedroom apartments and 73 two-bedroom apartments. Four of the apartments are Gold Plus rated designed for people with mobility impairment. The buildings also feature communal spaces such as outdoor recreation spaces with barbecues and edible community gardens.

Energy costs are a significant burden for people on low incomes and this is taken into account when designing social and affordable housing. Several design features help lower residents' ongoing energy costs including average eight-star NATHERS energy rating, electric only appliances, and rooftop solar panels. The apartments are designed to Liveable Housing Australia (LHA) gold and silver standard, making them adaptable over time to support aging in place, and resulting in generally larger apartments with good circulation spaces.



Apartment kitchen and living room

Location is key to creating vibrant communities, and these apartments meet that need in spades. Located close to public transport; shops such as Pacific Epping Shopping Centre; green open spaces such as Edgars Creek; education facilities including early education and Melbourne Polytechnic TAFE; and health facilities including Victorian Aboriginal Health Services, Epping Medical Centre, and Orange Door Mental Health Services.

About Haven Home Safe

Haven Home Safe is a for-purpose organisation that provides a range of housing solutions and wrap-around supports to help people find and keep a place they can call home. Haven Home Safe operates in 29 local government areas across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, with offices in Preston, Geelong, Bendigo and Mildura. Haven Home Safe partners with like-minded organisations, developers, investors and all tiers of government to deliver more affordable housing solutions and homelessness supports for Victorians.

Haven Home Safe is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Ashwood Chadstone Gateway

A community of social and private housing that has thrived for more than a decade

HousingFirst has provided social housing to hundreds of people for more than a decade at Ashwood Chadstone Gateway on Wurundjeri Country.

Completed in 2013, the project was the first large-scale public housing renewal project in Victoria. Six sites of vacant land and public housing in poor condition were redeveloped, resulting in a sixfold increase in the number of social housing homes on the site.

The project was led by HousingFirst with support from the Victorian State Government and the Federal Government for land and capital grant funding.

The site includes 210 social housing homes for people on the Victorian Housing Register (the waitlist for social housing in Victoria), and 72 privately owned homes. The sale of private homes supported project financing, with a requirement that HousingFirst build additional social housing in Essendon and Parkville, which it has successfully delivered.

Spread across four buildings, the homes range from one to four bedroom apartments and townhouses. One building houses people aged 55 and over, and 75 apartments are disability modified, or adaptable in the future.



Ashwood Chadstone Gateway exterior

At Ashwood Chadstone the social enterprise cafe has been a very rewarding and hugely successful program for both the tenants and the students – Clive Bowden, Chief Commercial Officer, HousingFirst

The Ashwood Chadstone Gateway community is a thriving and engaged community. Key to the community's success is HousingFirst's commitment to enhancing resident personal well-being through community programs.

The community programs empower residents to build and enhance connection with their neighbours, and improve their knowledge, skills and employment prospects. Programs include Pocket Market, CafEducation, The People's Shed and CommunityFirst meetings.



Pocket Market – a monthly low-cost fruit and vegetable market operated by HousingFirst and Berengarra, with produce delivered fresh from Yarra Valley farms.



CafEducation – an on-site social enterprise café run in partnership with Berengarra School as a training opportunity for the students. The café also provides the resident community with low-cost food and meeting spaces.

The **People's Shed** – a weekly event that gives residents a space to come together to work on DIY projects, share tools and talk.

CommunityFirst meetings – these well attended meetings provide an opportunity for residents to hear updates from HousingFirst staff, and provide feedback and have questions answered.

About HousingFirst

HousingFirst was born from a community campaign in the 1980s to stem the loss of affordable housing within the City of Port Phillip. Since then, the organisation has expanded to provide affordable long-term housing for low income households in 15 additional local government areas across metropolitan Melbourne. HousingFirst's mixed-tenure approach means many of its developments are home to a range of low to medium income residents, owner occupiers, market renters and commercial tenants. HousingFirst also provides more targeted accommodation specifically for singles, couples, families, the young, employed, unemployed, women, men, mothers with babies and over 55s across a range of houses, apartments, townhouses, self-contained studios and rooming houses. HousingFirst has secured funding through the Big Housing Build, including for a 152-home development in Brighton East.

Marlborough Street Balaclava

46 new affordable homes for low-income households

In October 2023, HousingFirst welcomed residents to their new homes in Marlborough Street, Balaclava. The homes are a mix of one, two and three-bedroom apartments offering diverse accommodation options to meet the needs of many types of renters.

The 46 architect-designed apartments have an 8.2- NatHERS rating and feature many environmentally sustainable and energy efficient elements, including naturally cross ventilated corridors, solar panels and passive shading techniques.

Residents can also enjoy a beautiful community terrace 'veggie garden', which provides a space to bring residents together.

The homes were available for people on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR), Victoria's single social housing waiting list. Residents are primarily older people, people living with a disability, and people escaping family violence.

The project is the result of a successful collaboration between registered community housing organisation HousingFirst and all three levels of government.



Marlborough St, Balaclava – apartment exterior

“The creative thinking at the heart of this project, where a carpark has been transformed into 46 homes, can truly change not only spaces but lives.” – Cr Heather Cunsolo, City of Port Phillip Mayor

The site, which is located close to shops and public transport, was previously a public car park. The City of Port Phillip (CoPP) donated the land to HousingFirst, who developed the site. In addition to the 46 social housing homes, the development also includes a ground floor space for a social enterprise, and a basement public car park which was transferred back to the CoPP.

The project was funded under the Victorian Government’s Building Works Package, and the Federal Government’s National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF).

This project aligns with CoPP’s strategic direction outlined in their Council Plan 2021-31 and Affordable Housing Strategy, In Our Backyard – Growing Affordable Housing in the City of Port Phillip 2015 – 2025.

“We want to foster a community with strong social connections, where people feel safer and welcome and have access to affordable housing and the information and services they need to support their health and wellbeing.” – City of Port Phillip



Marlborough St, Balaclava – community terrace

About HousingFirst

HousingFirst is an award-winning, regulated, not-for-profit organisation providing social housing to over 2000 people across Melbourne. Born from a community campaign in the 1980s to stem the loss of affordable housing within the City of Port Phillip, HousingFirst has since expanded to provide social housing in fifteen additional local government areas across Melbourne. In all developments HousingFirst strives to create a sense of place that residents can call home, build relationships with the surrounding community, and link with the full range of local services and opportunities to enable residents to thrive.



Marlborough St Balaclava – apartment interior



HousingFirst is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Viv's Place

An Australian-first apartment building tailored to women and children escaping family and domestic violence and homelessness

Launch Housing, in partnership with Uniting Vic.Tas, generous donors and the Victorian Government, welcomed its first families to their new home, Viv's Place, in August 2022.

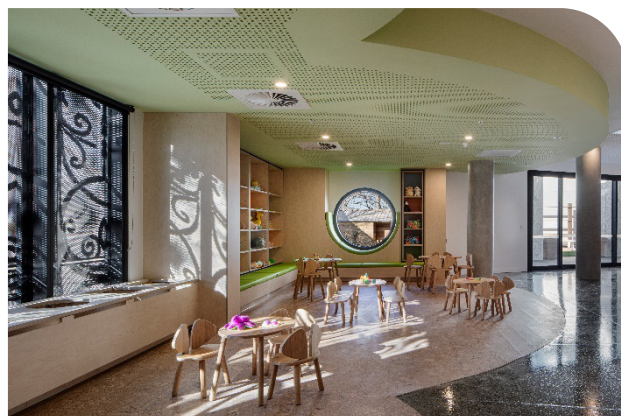
Located on Bunurong Country in Melbourne's South East, Viv's Place offers a unique combination of permanent housing and on-site wrap-around support services. This provides a fresh start for up to 60 women and 130 children at risk of or escaping family violence and homelessness.



Viv's place interior – apartment kitchen

Family and domestic violence is the single biggest driver of homelessness in Australia. Viv's Place helps solve this problem by providing safe, purpose built and beautifully designed housing for families, along with on-site support services and 24-7 Resident Engagement concierge.

From the first day families move in, they have a safe and permanent home to recover and rebuild, access to the support services they need and the opportunity to participate in the local community.



Viv's Place interior – children's play space

The building includes 60 apartments ranging in size from studios to 4 bedroom homes, with all studios providing a dual key functionality, for flexibility and ageing in place. Residents can also enjoy the communal kitchen and living spaces, children's play spaces, nature-play courtyard and family and child-specific services on site.

Viv's Place was initially anchored by donations from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and Shine on Foundation, followed by Gandel Foundation and The Ian Potter Foundation, as well as a host of other generous donors.

Most significantly, Viv's Place will demonstrate the social and economic value of permanent housing – Mr Charles Goode AC, Chairman of The Ian Potter Foundation



Viv's place exterior – nature play courtyard

Viv's Place is based on a highly successful model in Broadway, New York, which has created supported communities in such apartment blocks over 30 years and supported thousands of people out of homelessness by giving them a permanent home and other help.

Access to housing and supports will allow women to find stability and foster a healthy family environment, creating new futures for children, who will be supported to stay in school and to reach their full potential.

About Launch Housing

Launch Housing is a Registered Housing Provider that provides long-term and transitional housing homes in metropolitan Melbourne for disadvantaged Victorians. Through initial assessment points in Collingwood, St Kilda and Cheltenham, Launch Housing also delivers a range of homelessness services including crisis accommodation, specialist supports and rough sleeping services. Launch Housing also operates HomeGround Real Estate, a social enterprise real estate agency that reinvests profit back into the community. Through Victoria's Big Housing Build, Launch Housing completed the Bellfield social homes in Melbourne's inner north in early 2024.

At Viv's Place, children are supported to attend school, maintain healthy relationships with family, friends and community, and lead a happy and healthy life – Bevan Warner, Launch Housing CEO



Viv's place interior – parents lounge

Launch Housing is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Camelia Crescent co-operative housing

Brand new low maintenance homes in Geelong

In early 2023, the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd (NGRHC) completed three 2-bedroom homes in Wadawurrung Country, Geelong.

The three units are state-of-the-art, with double insulation, double glazing, solar panels and private and communal gardens. The homes have been designed to allow residents to age in place for as long as they can live independently.

The new homes enabled existing co-operative members to move to appropriately sized low-maintenance housing, freeing up larger homes for new renter-members.



Residents contribute to maintaining the communal gardens



Residents quickly formed a tightknit community

About co-operative housing

A housing co-operative is a community of people who voluntarily work together to meet their common need for affordable and sustainable housing. Members live in separate homes but actively participate in the management and running of the housing co-operative as a whole, with opportunities for all members to participate in the co-operative, according to their capacity and ability.

The three members who chose to relocate to the new homes already knew each other from the early days of the co-op so were able to quickly establish a tightknit community with shared history. The residents all contribute to maintaining the property's communal garden and are thrilled with their new homes.

This project was funded by Homes Victoria as part of the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build.



Residents are thrilled with their new homes



Rebecca enjoys her new low maintenance garden

About Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative

Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd (NGRHC) provides affordable long-term housing for low-income households, predominantly around the area of North Geelong. NGRHC homes are managed under a co-operative structure.

Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Templeton Street Wangaratta

44 safe, secure and affordable homes

Uniting welcomed residents to their new homes in Templeton Street Wangaratta in early 2025.

The project was the first delivered by Uniting under the Victorian Government's \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build. Uniting redeveloped the site and replaced ageing buildings which were no longer fit for purpose, with new high quality architecturally designed units.

The project comprises 44 one, two and three-bedroom units for around 90 people on the Victorian Housing Register (the waitlist for social housing in Victoria).

The homes are located close to key amenities including Wangaratta city centre, public transport, shops and parks. They are sustainably designed with a building registered for green star rating and a NatHERS (Energy efficiency rating) rating of seven.



Each unit has a private outdoor space



The units feature open plan living areas



The homes were designed to reflect the character and heritage of surrounding buildings.

About Uniting Housing

Uniting Housing is a subsidiary of Uniting Vic.Tas and provides homes across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria for individuals and families in housing stress, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Uniting Housing works in partnership with other community organisations so that renters can access a range of supports in an integrated approach to service delivery.

Uniting Housing is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Jimmy Kennedy Homes Shepparton

Independent living units for people aged 50 and over

Wintringham Housing was thrilled to welcome residents to their brand new homes on Yorta Yorta Country, in the heart of Shepparton in early 2023.

The Jimmy Kennedy social housing units provide 28 one-bedroom homes for people aged 50 and over in the Hume Region who have experienced or are vulnerable to homelessness. A key feature that sets Jimmy Kennedy apart from other housing is that it is co-located with residential aged care, which allows residents to age in place and remain living in a community where they are already settled.



Tanya at Jimmy Kennedy social housing



Jimmy Kennedy social housing units – exterior

Tanya is a new resident at Jimmy Kennedy Social Housing. Prior to moving in, she lived in a very small country town for 30 years, but had to relocate to Shepparton to access the health services she needed.

Unable to find a home she could afford in the private rental market, she stayed with her relatives, moving from house to house. It was always in the back of her mind that she didn't have a permanent place to call home.

Tanya was thrilled when she moved into her new home, which she loves:

"I don't have to worry about anything anymore. I'm not going to get kicked out of here, I can stay as long as I want."

Wintringham has been there supporting me all the time."

“Moving into this place was special – it was like they have my back, and they’ll have my back forever. It’s like being in a little community and they’re all willing to help you.” – Tanya, resident at Jimmy Kennedy social housing



Tanya loves living in her new home

On-site housing support services are available to residents to help them maximise their health and wellbeing and maintain their tenancies. Assistance is also offered to help residents connect with external supports and engage with the community if they choose.

With accessibility at the forefront, these homes have been purpose-built to Wintringham's international award-winning standards. Features include modified bathrooms built to disability standards, built-in wardrobes, external power points for easy mobility scooter charging, lift access, and a communal garden space.

The project was made possible through funding from the Victorian Government; the Victorian Branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF); the Ian Potter Foundation; and an Australian philanthropic trust.

About Wintringham

Wintringham Housing is a subsidiary of Wintringham, a specialised non-religious not-for-profit welfare organisation that is committed to providing a range of high-quality services to people aged 50 and over, who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness or financial disadvantage. As a registered Community Housing provider, Wintringham Housing manages safe and affordable housing for this cohort across Victoria and Tasmania, to assist them to live independently for as long as possible. Generally the housing consists of a one bedroom unit with an ensuite bathroom, built-in wardrobe, kitchen and living area, and an outdoor space.



The light-filled kitchens are modern and allow for very easy maintenance

Wintringham Housing is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

Nightingale Village

An inclusive community designed by an award-winning architect using social, environmental and financial sustainability principles

Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) was thrilled to offer nine homes in Nightingale Village for women and their children in 2022.

Located on Wurundjeri Country, Nightingale Village is a collection of six neighbouring buildings with a mix of social housing and affordable housing alongside privately owned properties. Each building in the village is designed by an award-winning architect, using the social, environmental and financial sustainability principles of the Nightingale model and with community in mind.

The buildings have a minimum 7-star energy rating and are Australia's first carbon neutral residential project. Recycled timbers and sustainable finishes feature throughout, as well as hydronic heating and solar power. Each apartment has a large balcony, offering ample private outdoor space.

Nightingale Village also features a variety of shared and communal facilities including car share, bike storage, rooftop gardens with expansive views, BBQs, laundry and drying spaces, and meeting/gathering spaces.

The vibrant village with strong community engagement is located in Brunswick between the Upfield train line and Sydney Road, offering renters close proximity to public transport, Bulleke Bek Park, shops and other amenities.

WPI works with a range of specialised support services to meet the individual needs of the women and children living in their homes.



Nightingale Village – apartment exterior and nearby park.

I'm just so blessed, I feel like I've been given a second chance in life. I consider myself one of the lucky ones. It's really hard out there if things go wrong. And if you're aged, I think it's even harder. – Val, WPI renter, Nightingale Village

Val, one of WPI's residents, says that before living in Nightingale she was financially strapped and became very depressed.

In July 2022 Val moved into her new home in Nightingale Village and shares what the experience has been like:

"It's given me another lease on life. The residents here really took us WPI tenants into their fold. They invited us to join the building WhatsApp chat, and really made us feel welcome."

"Living here I don't need a car. I have access to car share and the train is right here. I love it."

"With affordable rent it is so good not to worry constantly about money and to know that you've got a roof over your head for as long as you need it, and you're not going to go hungry. I look forward to having a long, happy life."



Nightingale Village – apartment kitchen

The homes were funded through Homes Victoria's Social Housing Growth Fund and a generous contribution from charitable organisation Matrix Guild, who also have nomination rights for four of the homes.

These homes provide WPI's renters with an opportunity to be part of an eclectic, inclusive and vibrant community and are beautiful spaces to live in. Nightingale Village also includes privately owned properties and homes owned by community housing organisation Housing Choices Australia.

WPI's renters have been warmly welcomed into this diverse and inclusive community. Many have participated in community events and initiatives and really feel like they are part of something special.

About WPI

Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) is a registered housing provider that provides long-term secure and affordable homes across metropolitan Melbourne for low-income women and women led families, as well as access to support networks and ongoing advocacy. WPI also operates a social enterprise real estate agency, Property Initiatives Real Estate, with 100% of the profits going towards providing safe, permanent housing for women and children facing homelessness.

Image credits: Kate Longley and Nightingale Housing

Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.

YWCA Bendigo

Affordable homes for women and their families in East Bendigo

YWCA welcomed six women and their families to their new homes on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in East Bendigo in 2021.

The five three-bedroom townhouses were architecturally designed by DKO Architecture and built by renowned builder GJ Gardner Homes. The project was a finalist for the Category of Modernisation of a Built Form Development in the 2021 PowerHousing Awards.

The properties were offered to women at below-market rates to give women and their families, including those who have experienced family and domestic violence, an opportunity to secure a safe affordable home.

The development contains five two storey, three-bedroom, two and a half bathroom townhouses. Each townhouse has a lock-up garage and a landscaped, fully fenced and secure private open space.



YWCA Bendigo – townhouse exterior



YWCA Bendigo – townhouse kitchen

All homes in the development are six-star energy rated and have several environmentally friendly features that also reduce costs for renters including solar panels, double glazed windows, energy efficient appliances and a water tank. To help renters connect with services, education, employment and community, each townhouse also has NBN connectivity.

YWCA selected the development's location to ensure residents are close to key services. The development is located approximately 2km from Bendigo railway station; 1.2km from the edge of the CBD; and within 1km of a full-line supermarket, TAFE education centre and several open space amenities including Bendigo East Bushland Reserve and Lake Weeroona.

Through a partnership with WomenCAN, residents also have the opportunity to undertake peer-supported training which will provide them with a Certificate III in individual support aged care.

I love it here. It's big enough for a family but still low maintenance – Renter, YWCA Bendigo Affordable Housing Development



YWCA Bendigo – townhouse private open space

The project was fully funded by YWCA who purchased the land on the open market and engaged Melbourne based and renowned architects DKO Architects to design the homes. YWCA commercially tendered the project on a fixed price contract with GJ Gardener the successful builder.

The project was constructed during COVID-19 lockdowns which caused time delays to the program. Despite these challenges, the project remained within budget and was completed to a high standard.



YWCA Bendigo – townhouse living room

Gretel, one of the development's residents tells her story and explains how important developments like this are:

"I cried when I got this place. I'd applied for a number of places and kept getting turned down. As a young woman and casual worker, it was hard to find somewhere within my budget that would take me. If I hadn't gotten this place, I'd probably be relying on family for a couch or spare room."

"If you're in a rough place or a situation you don't want to be in, there are people out there and organisations like YWCA who will help and give you a chance. I know there are other young women in Bendigo who could benefit from places like this."

About YWCA Housing

YWCA Housing is the only national women's housing provider in Australia with an affordable housing portfolio across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, as well as in Queensland and the Northern Territory. YWCA Housing is a subsidiary of YWCA Australia, a feminist organisation that provides housing and programs for women experiencing or at risk of homelessness

There are a lot of country people struggling with the price of rentals, especially single mums. If I wasn't living here, I'd be in a private rental - if I could find somewhere. So many people are struggling to find suitable affordable housing in Bendigo – Renter, YWCA Bendigo Affordable Housing Development

YWCA Housing is a member of the Community Housing Industry Association of Victoria (CHIA Vic), the peak body for the community housing sector in Victoria. CHIA Vic works to support the growth of community housing as the most effective and efficient means of ensuring more disadvantaged Victorians can enjoy the dignity of safe, secure and appropriate housing.