

Media release

EMBARGOED UNTIL
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Alliance calls for urgent action as homelessness rises across Melbourne's south east

An alliance of local government, community housing providers and homelessness services is calling for urgent action to tackle rising homelessness and Victoria's growing shortage of social and affordable housing ahead of the State Election.

Representatives from Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM), the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) and Launch Housing are asking all political parties to commit to a suite of initiatives that will grow social housing and reduce homelessness while supporting communities, councils and service providers.

In June 2026, more than 58,000 Victorian households were waiting for public or community housing, including over 19,000 families with children.

Victoria currently has approximately 88,000 long-term social housing properties, representing just 3 per cent of all housing stock in the state. This is the lowest proportion of social housing of any state or territory in Australia.

GSEM Chair Simon McKeon AO said councils across Melbourne's south east were seeing the impacts of the housing and homelessness crisis firsthand.

"Across our region, councils and communities are grappling with a real and visible increase in homelessness and rough sleeping," he said.

"Local services are under pressure and communities are increasingly concerned about the impacts on safety and wellbeing. This is not something councils can solve on their own."

"GSEM is proud to support CHIA Vic's election platform. Councils and the community housing sector share a common goal: delivering more affordable, secure housing and stronger communities. We're committed to working together to make that happen."

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, South East Melbourne recorded the second highest number of homeless clients in Australia in 2023-24, with 9,980 people seeking support. The region also recorded the second highest number of people at risk of homelessness and the third highest number of people experiencing homelessness.

CHIA Vic CEO Sarah Toohey said Victoria needed significantly more social and affordable housing to meet growing demand.

"At the 2021 Census there were 146,000 Victorian households in need of housing assistance, including people experiencing homelessness, living in overcrowded homes or paying rents they could not afford," she said.

"Without sustained investment, more Victorians will continue to be locked out of safe and affordable housing. Victoria needs to build 8,000 new social housing homes every year for the next decade if we are serious about meeting community need."

Launch Housing Service Manager for Enhancing Families and Children, Nadine Howard, said the impacts of housing insecurity extended well beyond having a place to live.

"Every day we see the difference that stable housing can make to a person's future," she said. "Young people, families and individuals facing homelessness need more than crisis support. They need secure housing and the opportunity to build a stable and independent life."

The three organisations came together at the Holmesglen Education First Youth Foyer in Glen Waverley to highlight the pressures being felt across local communities and the practical solutions that are urgently needed.

"Safe and affordable housing is the foundation for strong and connected communities," Mr McKeon said.

"When government invests in housing, the benefits are felt across the entire community. It improves outcomes for vulnerable people, reduces pressure on services and helps ensure our growing region remains liveable for everyone."

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About GSEM

GSEM represents the municipalities of Cardinia, Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Knox, Monash and Mornington Peninsula. The body includes representatives from each local council, and is supported by an Independent Board comprising of Chair Simon McKeon and directors Margaret Fitzherbert and James Merlino.

About CHIA Vic

CHIA Vic is the peak body for Victoria's community housing sector. CHIA Vic advocates for and supports its members so they can grow and thrive, providing more homes for people in need. Our mission is to help build a better housing system for all Victorians, one where everyone has the dignity of an appropriate, secure and affordable home.

About Launch Housing

Launch Housing is an independent community organisation working across Greater Melbourne. Each year we provide life-changing support for thousands of people, from all walks of life, facing homelessness and housing uncertainty. We work from prevention and crisis response, right through to long-term community housing – because when housing comes first, everything else becomes possible.