



YWCA CANBERRA

**Submission to the Queanbeyan-Palerang Draft Affordable Housing
Strategy**

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Acknowledgement of Country

YWCA Canberra proudly recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to own and control their cultures and pays our respect to these rights. YWCA Canberra acknowledges the need to respect and encourage the diversity of Indigenous cultures and to respect Indigenous worldviews, lifestyles, and customary laws. We extend our respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who for thousands of years have preserved the culture and practices of their communities on country. This land was never surrendered, and we acknowledge that it always was and will continue to always be Aboriginal land.

About YWCA Canberra

YWCA Canberra is a feminist not-for-profit organisation that has provided community services and represented women's issues in Canberra since 1929.

Our mission is 'We strengthen communities by supporting girls and women through our services and advocacy' and our vision is 'Girls and women thriving'.

We provide essential, quality services for women, girls and families in the ACT and surrounding regions. We work in the areas of children's services, community development, homelessness and affordable housing, youth services, personal and professional training, women's leadership and advocacy.

We are externally accredited against the [Quality Improvement Council \(QIC\) Health and Community Service Standards \(7th Edition\)](#). Accreditation against the QIC standards support us to improve client and community engagement, diversity and cultural appropriateness, management systems, governance and service delivery, while committing to a cycle of continuous quality improvement. In addition to the QIC standards, we are accredited against the following external client related service standards for our key areas of work:

- [Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission](#)
- [National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Aged Care](#)
- [National Regulatory System for Community Housing](#)
- [Registered Training Organisations Standards](#)

Through our national Affiliate Association with YWCA Australia, we are part of the World YWCA network, which connects 120 countries across the globe.

Introduction

YWCA Canberra welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Queanbeyan-Palerang Draft Affordable Housing Strategy. As the Draft Strategy outlines, regional communities across Australia are in a housing crisis due to a confluence of factors around supply, vacancy rates, demographic pressures, and affordability. As a provider of community services and a registered community housing provider, we are witnessing firsthand the increasing demand on housing and homeless services, growing numbers of people in regular employment struggling to afford rent, and people languishing for years on public housing waiting lists.

It is estimated that around 37,000 people in the ACT are in poverty including around 8,000 children. Many Canberrans turn to the Queanbeyan-Palerang area to find rentals which are considered more affordable, putting pressure on local housing supply. The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council highlights the region's affordability on its website as a pull factor for future residents.¹ While the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) found that around 60 per cent of households in NSW, in 2021, were experiencing rental stress,² relief is unlikely to be found in the Queanbeyan region as the Rental Affordability Snapshot reveals an impossibly small number of affordable rentals for all household types.³ For women who are escaping violence, the intersection between poverty, crisis and the sheer unavailability of housing makes returning to a perpetrator a confronting reality.

Measures to increase the supply of supported housing across the region and incentivise community housing providers to build more affordable supply must be part of the matrix of any future affordable housing strategy. As a provider of community and social housing, YWCA Canberra support strategies to increase housing stock across the housing spectrum. We use this submission to show support for social and affordable housing and take this opportunity to present the successful case study of our 'YHomes' supported housing development in Ainslie.

¹ <https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Council/Careers/Living-in-Queanbeyan-Palerang#:~:text=With%20a%20lower%20cost%20of,the%20major%20city%20of%20Canberra.>

² [NCOSS CostOfLiving22 FINAL DESIGNED.pdf](#)

³ <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rental-Affordability-Snapshot-Regional-reports.pdf>

YHomes: How Community Housing Providers can lift supply

'Yhomes' is YWCA Canberra's supported housing development that will provide well-located, safe, and fit-for-purpose housing for women on low incomes to live independently. This project demonstrates the capacity for community housing providers to contribute directly to lifting supply and ensuring that the most vulnerable are captured in forthcoming housing strategies.

The project will see nine studio (single occupancy) and two-bedroom units – each with a private courtyard – built on land owned by YWCA Canberra. It has been financed through our own funds, philanthropic donations, and funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) 'Safer Places' program, a program that was focused on new housing builds to accommodate women leaving violence. We also received partial funding from the ACT Government grant to develop architectural concepts and plans. YHomes aligns with our organisational vision to support girls and women in Canberra, and as a community housing provider we would welcome the opportunity to build similar medium density housing in the Queanbeyan-Pelarang region. YWCA Canberra encountered several delays throughout the ACT development application process which would likely be avoided in NSW. This is good news for future tenants and regional councils, as the timeline from scoping a project to welcoming new tenants would be significantly truncated.

YWCA Canberra would welcome the opportunity to work with the Queanbeyan-Pelarang council to build a similar development in a well serviced location within Queanbeyan. The next iteration of the Safer Places program will see \$100 million over five years to see builds like ours continue, across the country, with a focus on housing for cultural and linguistically diverse women as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have escaped violence or are homeless due to violence.

It is imperative that future affordable housing strategies consider those on low or fixed incomes who need supported or social housing. Projects like 'YHomes' is an example of what can be achieved when community housing organisations are able to access available land for the purpose of providing housing to low-income residents. We urge the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council to use the forthcoming housing strategy to consider how available land can be best used in the interests of lifting a spectrum of supply for the region.