



**Government
of South Australia**

Minister for Human Services

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Our ref: MCOR/0087
Your ref: 7128266

Ms Nat Cook
Member for Hurtle Vale
PO Box 158
WOODCROFT SA 5162

Sent by email: Tristan.rust@parliament.sa.gov.au

Dear Ms Cook,

Freedom of information application

I refer to your application under the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* (the Act), received by the Office of the Minister for Human Services on 12 October 2018 seeking access to:

Copies of any and all documents (including but not limited to physical and electronic material) regarding Ministerial agenda item "Women's Domestic Violence Services" from 13 June 2018.

Unfortunately, a determination was unable to be made within the 30 days, therefore it is considered to be a 'deemed refusal' under section 19(2)(b) of the Act. However, our office has continued to process your application outside of this timeframe. Section 19(2)(a) of the Act provides that an agency can release documents outside of the thirty-day timeframe, and this is still taken to be a determination under the Act.

One document has been identified as falling within the scope of your application and I have determined to release this document in full.

In accordance with the requirements of Premier and Cabinet Circular PC045, details of your FOI application, and the documents to which you are given access, may/will be published on the agency's disclosure log. A copy of PC045 can be found at <http://dpc.sa.gov.au/what-we-do/services-for-government/premier-and-cabinet-circulars>.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter, please contact Amanda Hockings, Office Manager, on telephone 8463 3388 or by email at amanda.hockings2@sa.gov.au. If you disagree with publication, you will need to advise the Office Manager within two weeks of the date of this determination.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Hockings', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amanda Hockings
ACCREDITED FOI OFFICER

13 / 3 / 2019

5 SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS – MCOR/0087

Freedom of information application from the Ms Nat Cook seeking access to *Copies of any and all documents (including but not limited to physical and electronic material) regarding Ministerial agenda item "Women's Domestic Violence Services" from 13 June 2018.*

No	Author	Addressee	Date	Description of document	Determination	Reason
1.	Department of Human Services	Minister for Human Services		New Housing Authority and Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services	Released in Full	



18TDHS/722

TO MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES

RE: NEW HOUSING AUTHORITY AND SPECIALIST WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Recommendation	Response
1. That you approve the retention of the funding to and operation of Women's Specialist Domestic Violence Services within the remit of the Department of Human Services.	Approved / Not Approved / Noted

Comments:	 ----- Hon Michelle Lensink MLC / / 2018
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KEY POINTS

- On 31 May 2018, the Chief Executive informed all staff that from 1 July 2018, the South Australian Housing Trust will operate as a new independent Housing Authority (the Authority).
- Housing SA currently manages the funding for South Australia's Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services, Housing SA and the Office for Women and a range of other Government and non-government partners are currently working together to ensure that services are delivered with a 'safety first' rather than a 'housing first' lens.
- Specialist Women's Domestic Violence services have raised concerns that this lens will be lost under the new model.
- The Safety First Work was prompted in part by recommendations made by the Social Development Committee of Parliament.
- It is proposed that the services, programs and other supports offered by Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services, in close partnership with the Office for Women, are retained within the Department, in order to ensure an ongoing safety first and women-focused approach.

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DISCUSSION

The Social Development Committee (SDC) Report into Domestic and Family Violence was tabled in both houses of Parliament on 12 April 2016, following an inquiry which considered the effectiveness of current national and South Australian domestic and family violence policies, programs, legislative frameworks and court processes. The Report identified system-wide issues and made 35 recommendations.

The former Governments response to the Social Development Committee's Inquiry in to domestic and family violence was finalised and tabled in the House of Assembly on Wednesday November 30 2016. The two most relevant recommendations are as follows:

20. It is recommended that the South Australian Government transfer responsibility and dedicated funding for Specialist Women's Domestic and Aboriginal Family Violence Services to a single portfolio, rather than across departments for Correctional Services, Communities and Social Inclusion, the Office for Women and Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. Given the nature of these services, they would be consistent with the portfolio of the Minister for the Status of Women.

21. It is recommended that the South Australian Government lobby the Commonwealth Government to separate dedicated domestic and family violence funding for accommodation from general homelessness services, as they currently are, and place them within the women's sector. This would improve focus on a 'safety first' response, rather a 'housing first' response.

Late in 2016, Housing SA and the Office for Women established the Women's Safety First Governance Committee. The Governance Committee was designed to oversee the integration of a women's safety service element within service agreements, as well as generally promoting and prioritising the delivery of 'safety first' responses to women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV).

The provision of funding to Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services through Government Housing and homelessness agencies is long standing. In December 1980, the Women's Shelter Housing Association was formally incorporated. This was the SA Housing Trust's first sponsorship of community housing. It offered women and children survivors of DFV an opportunity to make a meaningful transition from a temporary women's shelter into targeted medium-term rental housing managed by a community housing association.

A major strategic reform of the homelessness sector was undertaken prior to 2010. The reform sought to combine existing and new resources, engage mainstream commitment across the whole of government and redesign all existing specialist programs, to ensure a spread of high quality specialist homelessness services integrated with mainstream responses, across the state.

In terms of DFV Services, this reform saw a shift to utilising short term, cluster accommodation options for women and their children, enabling them to return to the family home as soon as it was safe to do so. Case management and on-site support to families in short term accommodation is provided when needed, with outreach services provided to women once they return to their homes. Keeping women safely in their own homes is a key priority.

South Australia has, since the 1990s, maintained the provision of homelessness funding to Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services. While this was never considered to be the best way of delivering funding, tying DFV Services to housing and homelessness as it

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inevitably did, it was crucial in ensuring that DFV organisations were funded and able to provide their much needed services.

More recently, safety first was established as a homelessness strategic priority. The Governance Committee is currently progressing a range of other work, and has approved a South Australian definition of 'safety first' which is soon to be shared and discussed at a national level, in relation to work being undertaken as part of the focus on housing and homelessness under the Third Action Plan.

There is significant risk that should Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services be made the responsibility of the new Authority, the result would be a 'disconnect' between the Department of Human Services and those Women's Domestic Violence Services. It could also make meaningful collaboration, as currently exists, between the Office for Women and Specialist Women's Domestic Violence services, far more difficult. Successful initiatives like the Women's Safety Contact Program, the Serial Offender Database, the Multi Agency Hub and the establishment of Women's Safety Services SA are just a few examples of the results of the current collaborative relationship between Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services and the Office for Women. This risk would certainly apply to a range of the Government's election commitments, many of which rely on close collaboration between the Department and the DFV Services. These commitments include the new crisis accommodation, the development of Safety Hubs and the 24/7 Crisis Line. Ongoing associated work, like the refinement of pathways through various services (including the crisis accommodation) for women and their children experiencing DFV would very likely also be impacted.

The recent announcement of the new Authority has also prompted feedback from the Coalition of Women's Domestic and Aboriginal Family Violence Services and Women's Safety Services South Australia, who have expressed concerns about what the new Authority will mean in terms on funding for Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services. This relates particularly to the fact that the new Authority will necessarily have a focus on 'bricks and mortar' housing and homelessness. Responses to DFV must be focused on supports and services, which help women and their children, including by helping them to remain in their own homes. DFV need not cause homelessness or create the need for new housing – the issues should be addressed before this crisis point is reached, by ensuring an ongoing focus on safety and enabling women and their children to stay within their own homes, and communities.

For these reasons, it is recommended that funding related to Specialist Women's Domestic Violence Services be retained within the Department. This will ensure that the services and programs provided by DFV services continue to ensure that the needs of women and their children, and their safety, remains of primary importance. It also means that their interventions to help women experiencing DFV can be targeted and timely, with an embedded safety first lens.

Should you approve of this recommendation, discussions will commence with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to confirm that this approach is consistent with the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

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BUDGET

Are there financial implications No

Is there a budget impact No

MEDIA/SENSITIVE: Yes

There may be media interest in these issues, given the focus on DAFV in the Government's election commitments.

Division	Office for Women		
Director	Fiona Mort/...../.....	
		signature	
Deputy Chief Executive	Lois Boswell/...../.....	
		signature	
Chief Executive	Tony Harrison/...../.....	
		signature	date

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. n/a

Contact Officer:	Rhiannon Burner, Senior Policy Officer 8303 0599, Rhiannon.burner@sa.gov.au
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