

26 November 2021

Domestic Violence NSW Service Management
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Sydney NSW 1230

Dear Community Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond and provide further detail to the *Chair's question: 'What do you think the different barriers are between urban and regional New South Wales? The main barriers?'*

At the time I responded with:

- Rental costs
- Access to infrastructure for basics like groceries,
- access to public transport,
- fuel costs.

DVSM has looked at the barriers in a holistic way that contribute to the challenges women and children experience in seeking stable affordable accommodation. A good proportion of these barriers affect both women and men, but there are many barriers that are gendered challenges for women. This includes many of the cultural norms and expectations for women in many communities.

Barriers

Sydney	Regional	Remote
Housing affordability (Rental costs more than 30%)	Adequate properties Housing affordability (Rental costs more than 30%)	Very few options or No properties Maintenance of rental properties backlog/not prioritised/inadequate time to complete
Income Rental assistance doesn't cover much in Sydney	Limited job opportunities	Extremely limited job opportunities
System navigation – if support is required where do I start?	System navigation – if support is required where do I start?	System navigation – if support is required where do I start and how I do if I don't have access to the internet or a good phone or computer to search on?
	Internet coverage	Extremely poor internet coverage or none
	Mobile Phone Coverage can be unreliable	Telstra only and poor phone coverage including calling 000. Black spots even in the towns
Affordable Continuing/Higher Education and re-training opportunities	Affordable Continuing/Higher Education and re-training opportunities	Very limited Continuing Education and re-training opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - travel required - online is not realistic



Cost of secondhand cars has increased significantly (supply/demand) and public transport costs add up for low income earners (to look for accommodation/basic needs)	Cost of secondhand cars has increased significantly (supply/demand) Limited public transport / costs	Extremely limited option to buy a secondhand car except from larger regional towns. Very limited public transport
Sydney	Regional	Remote
Costs of fuel, food, fruit and veg	Costs of fuel, food, fruit and veg	Higher costs of fuel, fruit and veg, freight for everything and limited supply
Access to supplies reasonably consistent		Very small grocery and general supplies shop with limited options
Health basics – wait lists if don't have private health insurance/ high density living	Health basics – wait lists if don't have private health insurance.	Medical, Dentistry and Pharmaceutical support and supplies – Mostly travel required – 200kms. Hospitals dispense some basic pharmaceuticals if attend for support.
Childcare – cost and places - Adhoc and permanent	Childcare -cost and places	Childcare – there is nothing formal/
		Access to professional services (lawyers, accountants)
		Access to Trades Plumbers Electricians Locksmiths
Sports		Limited sporting activities and opportunities
Socializing		Limited options for functions and socializing
Places to go when it is very hot or very cold	Places to go when it is very hot or very cold	Places to go when it is very hot and very cold. Including no library/shopping centres/ cafes/ any places indoor one can go during the day other than one's home and friend's and families' houses.

Some further detail regarding barriers for accommodation and basic living in Wilcannia as an example of many remote towns in NSW:

- There are no properties to rent. Many of the existing houses need significant repairs and maintenance wait timeframes are very delayed/unacceptable. We had a case of a grandmother living in a rental without a working bathroom for some time.
- Internet/Higher cost of fresh fruit and veg, food/Fuel. 200kms each way or 4 hours driving for fresh supplies. No deliveries to the town.



- Electricity unreliable - out for periods all year round. Times where it has been unavailable for at least 2 days. Just happens. (Can't save the freezer if you don't have a generator, and the IGA has extremely limited & expensive stock).
- Sewerage systems that need maintenance, but clear instructions may not have been passed on to the tenant/owner causing issue for the town, tenants and landlords.
- Trades are all coming from 200kms away for any house repairs and maintenance - Plumbing, Electrician, Locksmith, yard maintenance. Travel time charged to the resident/landlord.
- No chemist, dentist. Drs only through hospital or Flying Doctors support.
- No hairdresser
- No 0-5 childcare
- Two schools with combined grades/stages as class sizes are small – Kindergarten through to Year 12.
- 200 kms (with no phone/internet reception) to main infrastructure.
- 1 IGA Grocery/general store - with limited selections & is restocked once a week so if a lot of travellers go through can impact the community. (The shop was shut for periods this year in the COVID restrictions and for the 4 days of Easter last year when there were pandemic restrictions and grey nomads had to return home and bought all the shop's stock).
- 1 option for take away/dining in – Chinese at the one club socialising space.
- Limited professional services coming to the town and an individual must be available on the days they travel through (legal etc). Most professional services 200kms away including Lawyers, Accountants.
- Black spots in the town where 000 doesn't work.

Our team also noted there are differences for families in parts of Sydney. Many of the points are noted above and below are a few more barriers noted:

Inner, East and North Shore Sydney	Western and South West Sydney
Cost of rent	Cost of rent still prohibitive for many families
Dwellings not able to accommodate large families	Dwellings not able to accommodate large families
Real Estate Agents	Real Estate Agents
	Infrastructure can be further distances
	Patchy Internet
	Cultural challenges / expectations
	Public transport doesn't service everywhere
System navigation dependent on community and education levels	System navigation dependent on community and education levels

We were also asked about Housing First models by Ms Trish Doyle. Principles we know to be essential are:

- We are advocating for choice and flexibility and the reminder that our responses need to be tailored to the individuals and families as appropriate. We are supportive of the Core and Cluster model for refugees and have seen this work well in Wilcannia.



- Women escaping domestic and family violence need safe, self contained, maintained spaces close to infrastructure and supports.
- Stability in length of tenancy and minimising moving is also critical once a person or family is stable.
- Good friend to DVSM, Samantha Donnelly from the UTS School of Architecture has summarised good principles in her recent article:
<https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/why-its-essential-that-refuges-are-built-with-the-needs-of-the-women-and-children-that-use-them-at-heart/>

Thank you for seeking our input and DVSM being able to share some of our frontline experiences giving voice to the experiences of women and children we support.

We can be contacted for further detail as useful.

And we thank you for your work and attention to this issue. The cost of time spent looking for options for women, and the anguish is increasing daily.

Kindest regards,



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