

NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues

22 August 2022

Re: Supplementary Questions – Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness Amongst Older People, Aged over 55, in NSW

Dear Committee,

DVNSW would like to express concern at the following supplementary questions, as we believe that they are inflammatory and potentially detrimental to the safety of trans women. All women, cis and trans, are legally welcome to access women's services.

1. We have heard that many women's shelters take in transwomen.

a. Is that the policy of all women's shelters?

Commonwealth and NSW anti-discrimination laws protect trans people against discrimination when accessing goods, services, facilities and accommodation; including women's refuges. Access to safe and affirming shelter is crucial for the safety of trans women.

Trans women represent some of the most vulnerable and marginalised women in NSW, experiencing sexual, domestic and family violence at alarmingly high rates. For example, in one national study of over 6000 LGBTQ+ people, 41.9% of trans women surveyed reported they had experienced verbal abuse, 23.6% physical abuse, and 17.4% sexual violence by an intimate partner (Hill, Bourne, McNair, Carman, Lyons, 2020). In the same study, 31.9% of trans women reported ever having experienced homelessness (Hill et al., 2020). Sistergirls (Aboriginal trans women) and trans women from multicultural backgrounds face extraordinarily high rates of gendered violence (Ussher et al., 2020).

b. How far in the transformation process does a transwomen have to progress to be eligible to enter a woman's shelter?

We will not answer this question, as we believe it to be irrelevant.

2. Many women who are experiencing homelessness come from domestic violence situations or have been sexually abused. Many of these women don't feel safe or comfortable sharing accommodation with transwomen. How are these situations managed?

Women who have experienced domestic violence feel warranted fear due to the violence they have experienced, most commonly perpetrated by a man they know and have been in relationship. All new clients

of refugees are risk assessed to ensure that they do not pose any harm to the other women due to factors including their use of alcohol and other drugs and any violent criminal history.

DVNSW would be interested to see any research the committee demonstrating that cis women don't feel safe sharing accommodation with trans women, however, from our work with victim/survivors and with service providers, we do not believe that this is an accurate summary of the experiences of cis women who have experienced domestic and family violence.

References:

Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. and Lyons, A. (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

Ussher, J. M., Hawkey, A., Perz, J., Liampotong, P., Marjadi, B., Schmied, V., Dune, T., Sekar, J. A., Ryan, S., Charter, R., Thepsourinthone, J., Noack-Luindberg, K. and Brook, E. (2020). *Crossing the line: Lived experience of sexual violence among trans women of colour from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia* (Research report) / Sydney: ANROWS, 2020.