

Expression of Interest to
Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund

PROJECT SERENITY

DRAFT ONLY

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Submitted by NGO:

In partnership with:

Project Serenity (Community Group)

Etc.

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Mission Statement, Vision and Expected Benefits

Mission Statement:

To reduce homelessness and deaths resulting from domestic violence.

Vision:

A comprehensive system offering an alternative type of crisis accommodation to victims of domestic violence and abuse, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, relationship, cultural background, religion, language or form of violence/abuse, using principles similar to child fostering systems.

Expected Benefits:

Reduction in the number of deaths resulting from domestic violence.

Reduction in the burden on existing homeless refuges and crisis accommodation.

Reduction in the burden on child foster system by provision of alternative crisis accommodation suitable for a parent with children, allowing the children to remain with at least one parent/guardian throughout the crisis.

Reduction in the number of homeless, particularly parents with children.

Reduction in the number of victims returning to violence following crisis accommodation by allowing the victim sufficient time to find longer term, safe accommodation.

Reduction in the average duration a victim suffers abuse, and the escalation of abuse.

Victims feeling safer in crisis accommodation that is not concurrently housing former prisoners or individuals impacted by drug and alcohol abuse.

Provision of some crisis accommodation where the victim's pet(s) are welcome with them.

Project Timeframe

This is a long term project, expecting to continue to deliver on expected benefits for years. Funding is therefore sought for 4 years, delivered in stages.

Model Overview

The proposed model involves members of the public who have a spare room(s), applying and being vetted and trained to provide crisis accommodation, following principles similar to child fostering systems.

Scope and Description

Domestic violence has been referred to as a national epidemic, and requires nationwide solutions. A national system will reduce duplication of efforts and processes that may otherwise occur with multiple state-based systems, and allows for streamlined procurement arrangements. The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021 notes that the domestic and family violence service system is for the most part considered complex and fragmented. There is variation in the availability of services across the state, let alone the country.

Applications may be approved for Hosts who own the residence, or Hosts who rent the residence. Where the Host is a tenant, written approval will be required from the landlord. The residence is not required to be the owner's principle place of residence, such as a holiday home or investment.

Hosts are expected to provide clean, tidy, furnished accommodation and access to basic amenities such as toilet, bathroom, kitchen and laundry. They are not expected to provide transport, food, cook, clothe, clean up after or provide child minding for the Guest. Hosts will offer privacy, respect and discretion. Hosts will undergo compulsory training prior to having their registration approved and receiving any Guests, however they are not expected to provide counselling services, or perform an official referral service.

The crisis accommodation service will be non-discriminatory regarding the age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, relationship, cultural background, religion, language or form of violence/abuse of the victim or children, and similarly of Host applicants. Emotional, psychological and financial abuse are noted as forms of domestic abuse, often as a precursor to physical abuse.

The persons escaping abuse will be allocated to a specific Host accommodation by the Safer Pathways Local Coordination Point in NSW, and equivalent in other states/territories.

It is intended that victims that can be identified as having drug or alcohol addiction are excluded from referral to the Project Serenity system. This is due to the risk that exposure may be detrimental to the Host and their family. Due to the more complex issues involved in such cases, better outcomes may be achieved in other crisis accommodation where daily contact is with specifically trained professionals more experienced than Project Serenity Hosts.

Victims who own pets can be referred to a Host who has identified in their registration that they can welcome the type of pets specified.

The length of stay permitted at Project Serenity crisis accommodation must be such that Guests have sufficient time to organise more long term accommodation, to reduce likelihood of returning to violence.

Monetary compensation will be paid to Hosts via Project Serenity to cover utilities and shared essentials (eg. Toilet paper, laundry detergent) used by the Guest throughout their stay in the crisis accommodation, to ensure the Host is not out of pocket for providing the basics.

There may be circumstances where crisis accommodation nearby where the victim was living would be preferable for them (eg. They work in the area.), and other situations where the victim would feel safer if housed further away.

Opportunity for feedback will be made available to both the Guest and Host following the Guest's departure.

Host Application and Vetting Process

Applications should be submitted via a website, and will require similar detail to a foster care application.

The application will include how many bedrooms are generally available, and if the Applicant will offer to host children, men and/or women. This choice may be amended by the Applicant/Host at any time before or after registration. It is essential that at least one private bedroom is generally available.

All adults who live at the residence will need to be identified in the application. They will also have to undergo a police check and Working With Children check. The name and age of any children living at the residence (any %) must be provided.

Host Training and Registration Process

Host training will incorporate an online training package, a face to face session and a home visit.

Training should cover:

- Dealing with people who have suffered trauma,
- Resources that are available to assist Guests and Hosts,
- Talking to your children about hosting,
- Discretion and privacy,
- Sharing your home with people from various walks of life,
- Administration,
- Feedback process

A home visit will provide an opportunity for any follow up training and questions from the Applicant, and any information more specific to the locality. The home visit will also determine if the property is suitable, and what facilities are available. The **representative** conducting the home visit will confirm how many bedrooms are generally available and how many Guests in a family could be hosted at a time. The property will be confirmed as secure, as well as any fencing if the Applicant intends to host pets. Pets living at the residence will also be noted.

Upon details of a satisfactory home visit being entered into the system, the Host is considered registered, and may be allocated a Guest from that date onward.

The Host will be able to update details onto the online system in real time, to advise a change in preference of hosting children, men and/or women, or to advise dates that the property will be unavailable for hosting (eg. Going away for holidays. A reason is not required to be specified). The Host registration may also be suspended indefinitely, for example if the Guest and Host enter into a lease following the crisis period, or there is a change in circumstances for the Host family. There should be provision for a reason to be recorded, but the Host is not required to provide a reason. The registration may also be revoked if the Host is determined unsuitable at a later stage.

It may be beneficial if provision can be made to fast-track an applicant who is already registered as a foster carer.

Guest Referral and Intake Process

A representative of a Local Coordination Point should be able to search the system for Hosts and have the ability to filter the search to find the most suitable match for Host and Guest. Filters should include distance from a postcode, type of Guest welcome (children, men and/or women), languages spoken, pets permitted and current Host Status (available, booked, unavailable, suspended or revoked).

A representative of a Local Coordination Point should have authority to advise specialist services of a suitable Host. The specialist service may be able to encourage a victim to leave the violent home if they can tell them, for example, there is a lady in the next town over who would welcome you, your children and your staff. The Host's name, address or identifying details should not be disclosed to the Guest unless a booking is made.

The Guest must be booked in to the Host in the system by the Local Coordination Point, and this may be done in advance. The Local Coordination Point should advise an ETA window as best they can, however Hosts should understand that this could change. Communication between the Local Coordination Point and Host is important – if the LCP becomes aware that the Guest will be arriving late, or will not be coming, they are to advise the Host as soon as possible. If the Guest has not arrived within the ETA window provided, the Host should advise the LCP.

The system must be updated as soon as practical once the Guest vacates the crisis accommodation, so that the status of the Host is again available. The onus to update the system when the Guest vacates will be on the Host. They will also be required to complete feedback at that stage.

Consideration should be given to if it is suitable to pay the Host in arrears, once the Guest has vacated and the Host has submitted feedback.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Feedback Processes

Guest -

Host -

Review Process

Items Yet to be Defined

NGO who will submit the EOI

Partnering entities and roles

Quantifying the expected benefits

Budget

Funding opportunities from the Commonwealth and other states/territories

Quantifying potential Hosts

Equivalents to Safer Pathways Local Coordination Points in states/territories other than NSW

Budget

Project Serenity offers an opportunity for NSW co-investment with the Commonwealth and other states/territories – a Blueprint Action included in the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021.

Signatories