

MEDIA RELEASE - For Immediate Release



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Broken Promises, Broken Shelter

Government Abandons \$6.5M Redevelopment of Dawn House – Nothing Built, Funding Gone!

Dawn House Women's Shelter has today expressed deep concern and disappointment at the complete removal of the long-promised \$6.5 million redevelopment funding from the Northern Territory Government's 2025–26 Budget — despite the project never having commenced.

Promised in 2021 and reaffirmed again in the 2023–24 Mid-Year Report, the funding was to replace ageing crisis accommodation and expand capacity for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. Instead, four years on, the redevelopment has been left to languish in government bureaucracy and the funding has now been quietly erased from the latest budget papers.

This comes despite a full year of continued engagement from the Department of Infrastructure, which held planning meetings with Dawn House throughout 2024–25. At no stage was it communicated to the organisation that the funding was at risk — until now.

Ana Aitcheson, CEO of Dawn House, said the sudden withdrawal of funds without explanation or accountability was indefensible.

"For the past year, we've been in active discussions with the Department of Infrastructure, talking timelines, designs and delivery options. We were led to believe the project was moving forward. Now we learn, not through a phone call or meeting, but during estimates, that the funding has been removed entirely."

"The women and children who come through our doors have already endured the unimaginable. To now be told that promised redevelopment funding has simply vanished from the books, without a single nail driven, is beyond frustrating. It's disgraceful."

Each year, Dawn House provides over 6,500 crisis accommodation bed nights to women and children escaping violence, often with nowhere else to go. With the Northern Territory holding the highest rates of domestic and family violence in Australia, the need for safe, secure accommodation is growing, not shrinking. Each month Dawn House has to turn away up to 200 women and children reaching out for support.

"We are operating at capacity in facilities that desperately need repair and/or replacement. This was never a 'nice to have', it was essential infrastructure for the safety and dignity of women and children. This decision shows just how low a priority that has become."

"During Estimates, the Minister stated that she is working to secure funding for the Dawn House redevelopment. We are now holding her to that statement. The safety of women and children in the Territory demands more than words — it requires urgent, tangible action.

The demand for safe, secure, and trauma-informed crisis accommodation continues to grow — but without proper investment, services like Dawn House are being asked to do more with less. For many women and children, that could mean the difference between safety and risk.

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