

**15 May 2020**

**VOLUNTEERS RALLY TO CREATE A SAFE HAVEN ON THE SUNSHINE COAST IN JUST 48 HOURS  
FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS AND THOSE NEEDING CHEAPER HOUSING  
IN THE FACE OF COVID**

A team of volunteers created affordable housing for vulnerable people in just 48 hours in response to the increasing domestic violence risk posed by a COVID-19 stay-at-home lockdown, and to help offer more affordable housing to those who have been financially affected by job losses.

Working 4 x 12-hour shifts from Monday to Thursday, the volunteer team of students and their master builder converted a domestic home into five individual micro-apartments - each with their own bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette.

With many victims of domestic violence being forced to shelter alongside their abusers, whilst they wait out the pandemic, Covid-19 is not the only threat they face on a daily basis.

Since a known tactic of an abuser is to isolate victims from their family and friends, a COVID-19 lockdown ensures they leverage this threat under the guise of doing so 'in the interests of public health'.

Jaeneen Cunningham, Safe Haven CEO, a national register of security vetted, short-term accommodation helping women escape domestic violence applauds the innovative initiative, appreciating the urgency in the current climate.

"Unfortunately, not one cent of the \$150 million announced by the Morrison Government into domestic violence is going towards accommodation. It's going to counselling. We know there is going to be a massive increase for safe housing over the coming months.

"The problem for many women now is that the perpetrator is most likely home with them, making it even more difficult to reach out for help.

"What these women need most is a long-term roof over their head, and these micro-apartments offer victims affordable, long-term housing.

"They also address the issue of isolation that often drives victims back to their abuser, and instead wraps a small community around these people at a time when they need connection the most," Cunningham said.

Small is the New Big Co-Founder Ian Ugarte is behind the 48-hour housing initiative and said tenants would pay approximately half standard rental prices, and the rent would include utilities like water, electricity and internet access to help ease the financial burden on the most vulnerable.

“A by-product of the global pandemic is the heightened attention given to the housing affordability crisis, particularly for those most vulnerable in our society, including those who have lost their jobs and need cheaper accommodation as well as those suffering the impact of domestic violence.

“Not only do we need to keep renters and mortgage holders in their homes, we must ensure they’re safe in their homes,” he said.

While this property is in South-East Queensland, interest in the initiative is likely to lead to similar developments elsewhere, with the students helping on the Queensland development, learning what they need to do to duplicate safe micro-apartments in other locations.