

**4 December 2025**

**For Immediate Release**

### **New housing for women in Bendigo reaches major milestone**

Women in Bendigo will soon have more access to safe and secure long-term homes, with structural works now complete on 35 new social housing dwellings in the Burnayi Lurnayi development.

YWCA Australia, a national specialist women's housing provider, together with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA, marked the milestone today with a Topping Out ceremony attended by Federal Housing Minister The Hon. Clare O'Neil MP, Josh Burns MP, Special Envoy for Social Housing and Homelessness and Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters.

The ceremony recognised the completion of the building's structural phase and included the placement of a sheoak tree on the top floor, a contemporary interpretation of the traditional topping-out ritual. Sheoaks are women's trees and native to Djaara country.

The \$20 million project reflects strong partnerships and cross-government commitment, supported by funding from the Housing Australia Future Fund, Homes Victoria through the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build, and a grant from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation (now Greater Melbourne Foundation). The Albanese Government's investment through the Housing Australia Future Fund has been critical in enabling this project and accelerating the delivery of new homes for women.

YWCA Australia Group CEO, Michelle Phillips, said the development demonstrates what coordinated investment and collaboration can achieve for regional communities.

"The solution to Australia's housing challenges relies on governments working together with specialist providers and community partners. Burnayi Lurnayi shows what this collaboration makes possible, creating 35 new safe, secure and affordable homes for women in Bendigo", Ms Phillips said.

Due for completion in mid 2026, the development has been designed with the unique needs of women at the centre. It includes a three-storey apartment building with 12 one-bedroom and 14 two-bedroom units, plus nine three-bedroom townhouses.

Burnayi Lurnayi, meaning "young women" in Dja Dja Wurrung language, will house women and their families, with at least half of the homes prioritised for First Nations women.

“Safe homes are the pathway to equal futures. We look forward to continuing our partnership with government and delivering more homes so women, gender diverse people and their families can build the future they want”, Ms Phillips said.

**Quotes attributable to Cassandra Lewis, Interim CEO Dja Dja Wurrung**

Dja Dja Wurrung Group Interim CEO Cassandra Lewis described the Burnayi Lurnayi development as an important initiative that would help ease housing stress for First Nations and non-Indigenous women and families.

“We hear about the housing crisis every day. Finding safe, affordable housing is especially challenging for people dealing with the impacts of inter-generational disadvantage and trauma – which, unfortunately, is too often First Nations People,” Ms Lewis said.

“DJAARA is proud to partner with YWCA in this development. Dja Dja Wurrung women have contributed to the design of the units and landscaping, as well as the name.

“Burnayi Lurnayi (young women) honours the importance of women in our community and the need to provide safe, secure housing for our young women so they can establish themselves, become financially independent, and participate in society,” Ms Lewis said.

**Quotes attributable to Federal Housing Minister, The Hon. Clare O’Neil MP**

“Labor’s building more homes in Bendigo and beyond, because that the big fix for making housing more affordable.

“The Albanese Labor Government’s housing fund is picking up pace and that’s great news for Bendigo with 35 more social homes on the way, as part of our plan to build 55,000 social and affordable homes across Australia.”

**Quotes attributable to Lisa Chesters Federal Member for Bendigo**

“I am proud to be part of an Albanese Labor Government that’s delivering more homes in Bendigo. We are delivering more social and affordable housing for women and children in our region.

“This project is more than just a new housing development close to central Bendigo. It will create a community that’s respectful of cultural and inclusion.”

**Ends**

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**About YWCA Australia**

YWCA Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation that has supported women and gender diverse people for more than 140 years. We currently own and manage more than 500 social and affordable homes across the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria and deliver specialist supports. We are the experts in gender-responsive housing and homelessness solutions.

[www.ywca.org.au](http://www.ywca.org.au)

**About DJAARA**

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA, is the representative body for the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of Djandak in Central Victoria.

[djadjawurrung.com.au](http://djadjawurrung.com.au)