

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Helping homelessness women and their children start new lives**

*“Toora helped me to get housed. This will help me and my children to start a new life and put the past trauma behind us”*

Women and children escaping domestic violence are contributing to the growing numbers of homeless people in Canberra, and support organisations are struggling to provide even the most basic services.

With more than 1600 Canberrans homeless on any given night, Toora Women Incorporated (Toora) last year provided support for 269 women and 200 children citing domestic and family violence as a reason for being homeless.

“Due to the immediate threat to their safety, women and children in our service are often forced to leave their homes quickly without bringing their belongings,” says Toora’s Executive Director Susan Clarke-Lindfield. “Finding safe and affordable housing becomes their main priority.”

“Many of the children in our care suffer multiple forms of harm and are victims of complex trauma from either witnessing or suffering from violence themselves.”

Toora is pleased that \$100,000 additional funding announced in the ACT 2018 Budget will support the employment of a child and family specialist, but more support is needed to help these children have as normal life as possible within their present circumstances.

“Innocent children’s lives are significantly disrupted for reasons beyond their control,” Ms Clarke-Lindfield says. “We have children between 0-12 years who are without warm clothes.

“We are also supporting several new mothers whose physical and mental stress has affected their breast milk production and they must rely on baby formulas. Without jobs, they also do not have enough money to buy basic needs such as nappies.

“These children may also have difficulties at school and need a lot of support whether it is with completing their homework or counselling. And for mothers who would like to study or work, it is impossible for them to afford early or after school care for their children.”

The theme of Homelessness Week 2018 (6-12 August) is “Ending homelessness together” with a focus on raising awareness and encouraging the community to get actively involved.

Community donations, which could make a valuable difference to the lives of the women and children in Toora’s service, can be made through Toora’s website at [www.toora.org.au](http://www.toora.org.au)

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