

SWAN Women for Housing Justice

Despite the wealth and high standard of living visible across much of the Mornington Peninsula, we also have some big challenges in terms of a lack of affordable housing and rental property, and a lack of safe transitional housing. Our area ranks as fourth highest for disadvantage in Victoria. Numbers from just the Southern Peninsula Community Centre alone for 2023/2024 were up 33% on the previous year, with 4,866 presentations/visits across the three Community Centres for homelessness, and 69% of those seeking support being women. The last census showed that many of these women are staying with others or are in supported accommodation. 74% of those affected by family violence in 2024 were female. The only existing transitional housing facility – The Ranch – has just a couple of family rooms and is facing imminent closure. There is no women's-only shelter currently available. All current women's shelters, and most available support services are in Frankston and further north. Motels and rooming houses are unsafe.

We need affordable housing, safe crisis housing and more local wrap-around support. We need an urgent replacement for The Ranch.

In 2024 SWAN established a SWAN Women for Housing Justice group who have been writing to, and meeting with, local, state and federal politicians. So far, we have met with the Shire's CEO John Baker, MPs Tom McIntosh, Chris Crewther, Jodie Belyea, Zoe McKenzie, Paul Mercurio, the Minister for Housing Harriet Shing, and the Salvation Army Operations Manager Suhail Awn. We have received mostly positive reception to our concerns including some commitment to the repair and upgrade of existing local community housing and interest in some type of replacement for The Ranch. We have also been running an awareness-building campaign through the media. We are currently planning a broad-based round table discussion with politicians and community leaders for later this year to develop concrete solutions and implementable actions.

SWAN Advocacy Against Gender-based Violence

SWAN has had a long-standing concern about domestic and family violence. Since its inception, members have participated in countless campaigns, voicing their demands for legislative change and increasing community awareness and support, to address this critical human rights issue.

This includes:

- Between 1996-2005 SWAN members campaigned for the release of Heather Osland who was unjustly convicted of the murder of her violent and abusive husband.
- Guest speakers have presented at SWAN meetings about their personal experience of domestic violence and of their efforts to raise awareness and take action to achieve systemic change, including Irene Bolger, Dr Carolyn Taylor, Hannah Jay, Rosie Batty AO.
- SWAN has hosted several events to raise community awareness and promote action to address family and domestic violence. Examples include: a '*Peninsula Forum*' at which several women spoke about domestic violence, homelessness, palliative care and abuse; a public seminar entitled '*Women Against Domestic Violence*' co-presented by Chisholm TAFE; and a '*Domestic Violence Seminar*, run jointly by Mornington Peninsula Shire.

- SWAN members have joined other local community groups to facilitate street marches and other community awareness raising activities on the Peninsula as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign initiated by United Nations in 2009 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/unite/16-days-of-activism>

Despite advancement in some areas, gender-based violence remains serious and widespread <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts>

Building on this long-term advocacy, in 2024, SWAN formed the *Women Against Gender-based Violence* group as part of our campaign to seek justice for women. Activities include:

- Met with Jodie Belyea, Federal MP for Dunkley, to highlight issues facing women experiencing violence and homelessness;
- Sent articles and letters to the local media to draw public attention to these critical concerns;
- Wrote to local MPs and put candidates in Council elections on notice, to show that constituents want to know how they will work to address such escalating injustice.
- Guest speaker at the SWAN General Meeting in November 2024 is Dr Helen Keleher, who has extensive experience in promoting gender justice. This presentation leads into this year's *16 Days of Activism for the Prevention of Violence* campaign on the Peninsula.
- A March Against Gender-based Violence is being held at Mornington Park on 1 December 2024.

Other areas in which SWAN has been involved over the years include:

- Supporting community empowerment and increasing the participation of women
- Environmental issues on the Peninsula
- Promoting multiculturalism
- Advocacy for asylum seekers and refugees
- Challenging racial prejudice and discrimination
- [Supporting First Nations people](#)