

# Social Impact Statement

CORE & CLUSTER: SINGLETON  
HOUSING PLUS

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# Introduction

## Background

### About Housing Plus

Housing Plus is a progressive social enterprise and registered non-profit that works to improve social outcomes for individuals and communities in regional NSW through community housing development and services. As a leading regional Tier 1 Community Housing Provider and specialist Community Services Provider, Housing Plus has a 40-year history of providing client-centred tenancy and property management services to the Central West and Western regions of NSW.

### About the Core and Cluster development

Housing Plus is proposing to develop domestic and family violence (DFV) crisis accommodation using the Core and Cluster model. This model is leading practice within Australia to serve the needs of women and children affected by DFV.

As defined by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, “self-contained accommodation units (the “cluster”) are located close to communal facilities/areas (the “core”), which provide access to services such as counselling, legal assistance, education, and employment support as well as shared spaces. The Core and Cluster approach allows residents to access much needed support and assistance, while also having the personal space and necessary amenities to effectively deal with personal issues and trauma.”<sup>1</sup>

In Australia the trauma-informed Core and Cluster model was endorsed in *the Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016* and has been successfully trialled by the NSW government, along with other state governments, over recent years.

With support of the NSW government, Housing Plus opened The Orchard in November 2020, a Core and Cluster refuge for women and children affected by DFV in and around Orange, NSW. The development has been working with residents, stakeholders, and the local community since commencing operations, and is recognised as an exemplar of the Core and Cluster model, consistently delivering successful outcomes for the women and children who use the service.<sup>2</sup>

### The current development application

Singleton Council (Council) provided commentary to Housing Plus that “information on measures to mitigate or eliminate potential community risks / perceptions appear to be lacking” from the development application. The Social Impact Statement (SIS) sets out the information requested in a format that will assist Council and the determining authority in assessing and addressing concerns identified through community submissions and broader commentary.

## Social Impact Statement Purpose

A SIS outlines the potential social consequences that a proposed development may have on individuals or community groups. It provides planning approval decision-makers with an evidence-backed evaluation of the likelihood and magnitude of such social impacts, contributing to their determination, alongside other factors.

Relevantly, while the purpose of the Core and Cluster development is focused on increasing the safety and security of women and children affected by DFV, the purpose of this SIS is to achieve an independent assessment of impact.

This SIS achieves the following:

- Identifies impacted people
- Outlines potential social impacts of the development on those people
- Details mitigation or enhancement strategies applied by the proponent
- Assesses the significance of the resulting impact or benefit
- Proposes a plan for managing social impact once operational

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Communities and Justice, (2022), Core and Cluster Discussion Paper, page 5. Available at: <https://victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/dcj/dcj-website/documents/service-providers/domestic-and-family-violence-services/core-and-cluster/Core-and-Cluster-Discussion-Paper-May-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Housing Plus, (About) The Orchard, <https://housingplus.com.au/about-us/current-projects/orchard/>

By assessing and responding to social impacts from the perspective of people directly or indirectly impact, the Core and Cluster development is more likely to be designed and operated in a manner that is socially sustainable and beneficial to all parties involved, while also addressing potential challenges and mitigating negative impacts.

## Scope of this Social Impact Statement

The SIS focuses on social impacts once the Core and Cluster development is in use as DFV accommodation. This focus is in response to the community and stakeholders core concerns around impact once operational. The SIS does not cover impacts relating to construction of the development.

## Preparation of SIS

A SIS as it relates to a generic Core and Cluster development in regional NSW was first developed by independent social impact experts, bd infrastructure. This SIS for the Singleton Core and Cluster model has been undertaken by Housing Plus by tailoring the original SIS to the specific context and community. While the project is not considered a state significant infrastructure, it uses the process recommended in the *Social Impact Assessment Guidelines (2023, NSW)* to ensure the statement meets the needs of the planning approval determinants.

# Impacted people

## Identifying impacted groups

Impact has been assessed from the perspective of those who may experience a potential social impact. The following table identifies these groups.

Table 0-1: Impacted people

Group	Description
Residents	Women and children affected by DFV and living in the Housing Plus accommodation services for a period of time.
Neighbours	People living or working within close proximity to the development and most likely to experience any direct positive or negative impacts.
Broader community	People living or working in the surrounding suburb/s, most likely to experience indirect positive or negative impacts (if at all).
Community service providers	Community organisations who may be impacted by the operation of the DFV accommodation. This includes emergency services, and providers of DFV services.

# Social impacts

## Identifying and scoping social impacts

Under the *Social Impact Assessment Guidelines (2023, NSW DPE)* social impacts are defined as the consequences that people experience when a new project brings change. The term people includes individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations. In this instance, people have been defined as the groups in *Section 0 Impacted people*.

Social impacts can have different characteristics including being positive, negative, physically observable, rational or justified fears, tangible, intangible, direct or indirect. Relevantly, some impacts may arise from individual views or misconceptions about the project, not the objective or actual outcome. A perceived impact based on a misconception will receive a low-level impact assessment and therefore be unlikely to lead to an action or a change in the project. The related impact on a person's mental state, such as fear due to a misconception, is assessed separately, and would require different mitigation strategies e.g. engagement or education activities.

## Assessing social impacts

The assessment of impacts involves evaluating how significant each potential social impact will be before any mitigation or enhancement strategies. Significance is understood by considering the likelihood of the impact occurring and the potential magnitude, assessed from the perspective of those expected to be impacted, as opposed to the impact on the project.

The definition for each level of likelihood and magnitude are below in accordance with the *Social Impact Assessment Guidelines – Technical Supplement (2023, NSW)*. It is noted that these guidelines are designed for State Significant Infrastructure, so need to be translated to suit a local property development. Assessment has been conducted by social impact specialists at bd infrastructure who take a position of independence and impartiality when conducting assessments.

Table 0-1: Levels of likelihood of social impact

Likelihood level	Meaning
Almost certain	Definite or almost definitely expected (e.g., has happened on similar projects).
Likely	High probability.
Possible	Medium probability.

Likelihood level	Meaning
Unlikely	Low probability.
Very unlikely	Improbable or remote probability.

Table 0-2: Levels of magnitude of social impact

Magnitude level	Meaning
Transformational	Substantial change experienced in community wellbeing, livelihood, infrastructure, services, health, and/or heritage values; permanent displacement or addition of at least 20% of a community.
Major	Substantial deterioration/improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an indefinite time, or affecting many people in a widespread area.
Moderate	Noticeable deterioration/improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an extensive time, or affecting a group of people.
Minor	Mild deterioration/improvement, for a reasonably short time, for a small number of people who are generally adaptable and not vulnerable.
Minimal	Little noticeable change experienced by people in the locality.

Table 0-3: Social impact significance table

	Magnitude level					
		Minimal	Minor	Moderate	Major	Transformational
Likelihood level	Almost certain	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Very High
	Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High
	Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Very unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

## Application to the development

Potential positive and negative impacts are identified below, according to the groups identified in *Section 0 Impacted people*.

Evidence has been provided to explain the assessment of each potential impact. Evidence is drawn from a number of primary and secondary sources and includes reference to lived experience and outcomes from the 'Orchard' – a similar Housing Plus Core and Cluster model for women and children experiencing DFV in Orange, NSW, established in November 2020.

## Residents

Table 0-4: Identification, mitigation or enhancement and assessment of social impacts for residents

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Leaving an abusive relationship due to having a suitable place to live	Positive	Women removing themselves and their children from environments of abuse. The impact is driven by providing women with the right type of accommodation and environment, as a large barrier to leave a DFV relationship is if they have nowhere else to go, or if their options for accommodation further stigmatise or disadvantage them or their children.	The development is designed in accordance with best practice design standards for accommodation housing those affected by DFV (see <i>Appendix – A: Design Guide</i> for more information). The standards were created based on research into specialist DFV accommodation including literature and consultation with the sector. Furthermore, the development adopts a Core and Cluster model which provides onsite support alongside independent accommodation.	<b>Level: Likely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Once accepted into the program accommodation is guaranteed. The Orchard demonstrates the successful operation of the delivery model providing accommodation adapted to the family needs (pets, division of rooms, cultural requirements etc) along with clothing, food, household items, and everyday items residents need to start again. The 'Core and Cluster' model has been successful trialled in Victoria and NSW (including by Housing Plus in Orange) following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.	<b>Level: Major</b> <i>Evidence:</i> A long term impact for a vulnerable community group. The development will provide for approximately 62 people per year. Appropriate housing is the foundation for change in the lives of women and their families affected by DFV, and directly impacts their sense of security and wellbeing. <sup>3</sup> Additionally, the effect of physically removing a person from an abusive home, rather than attempting to address the issue through at-home interventions, results in more sustainable, long term outcomes. <sup>4</sup>	<b>Overall assessment:</b> High
Safety and security	Positive	An environment that is free from violence and designed to rebuild a sense of safety and security.	The development is designed for physical safety, as well as mental and emotional safety. This includes close consultation with police/crime prevention officers throughout all	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Given the specialised design and security measures there is	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Where women and children are situated in such an environment	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

<sup>3</sup> Champion, T Gander, C Camacho Duarte, O Pibbs, P Crabtree, L Kirkby, M 2009. *The Impact of Housing on the Lives of Women and Children - Post Domestic Violence Crisis Accommodation: A Study Undertaken by the NSW Women Refuge Movement and the UWS Urban Research Centre*. Available at: <https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:23310> (**NSW Women Refuge Movement Study**)

<sup>4</sup> A service to create safe home environments for women and children affected by domestic violence led to positive wellbeing outcomes at the end of the six-week program, however results were not sustained beyond the initial support period and the outcomes decreased back to original levels as abusive resumed. Meyer S 2014. *Victims' experiences of short-and long-term safety and wellbeing: Findings from an examination of an integrated response to domestic violence*. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 478. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti184527>

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
			design stages CCTV around perimeter, in carpark and common areas ensuring no blind spots, 24/7 on site staffing, fencing around perimeter and each individual unit and a back to base alarm system.	<p>a high probability that residents will be living in an environment where they are physically safe and secure.</p> <p>However, for women and children who have come from manipulative, volatile and violent environments, they may need more than a few months of experiencing that reality before feeling emotionally safe and secure.</p>	<p>that creates a sense of safety and security they have an opportunity to uncover more about the impact of the trauma on their lives and begin to recover.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>In particular, the provision of safe spaces for children has the potential to not only meet their needs for a safer life but also to break the cyclical nature of family violence.<sup>6</sup></p> <p>Testimonials and case studies of residents from the Orchard demonstrate the follow on effects from first feeling safe, <i>“Knowing that the kids and I are not only safe, we are supported, fed, have clean clothes and a bed to sleep in. A safe haven until I rebuild myself again. Having the staff around are helping me become the strong independent, caring mother I aim to be.”</i></p>	

<sup>5</sup> Salter, M., Conroy, E., Dragiewicz, M., Burke, J., Ussher, J., Middleton, W., Vilenica, S., Martin Monzon, B., & Noack-Lundberg, K. (2020). *“A deep wound under my heart”: Constructions of complex trauma and implications for women’s wellbeing and safety from violence* (Research report, 12/2020). Sydney: ANROWS. Available at: <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/constructions-of-complex-trauma-and-implications-for-womens-wellbeing-and-safety-from-violence/>

<sup>6</sup> Extract from *Donnelly (2020), Design Guide for Refuge Accommodation for Women and Children*, detailed on page 23 of Design Guide, Housing Plus and Custance Architects (see Appendix A)



Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Dignity and independence	Positive	Women and children are in an environment that allows them to live with dignity and independence, an option that is not always possible at a family violence refuge or friend's home.	<p>Residents are provided with accommodation built to allow for independent living and private spaces, without creating a sense of isolation. This includes fully self-contained units with front/back door and small yard providing a sense of "normality", quality and aesthetically pleasing finishings to promote a sense of self-worth and wellbeing, routines established or continued, families have the choice to live independently without interference while having the opportunity for group interaction if they wish.</p> <p>The location for the development was selected so that it does not have an institutional setting, but rather a quiet residential area where women and children will have dignity and feel safe.</p>	<p><b>Level: Likely</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Given the evidence-based design, residents can continue to lead relatively normal routines, with the absence of abuse that impacts their physical and mental health. While it may take some time to adjust, this environment is likely to provide dignity and independence for residents, and more so than alternative DFV accommodation options.</p>	<p><b>Level: Moderate</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>The majority of those with lived experience of DFV consider a community setting to be ideal for privacy, security and therapeutic reasons.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Testimonials from a NSW Women Refuge Movement study demonstrates the impact of dignity and independence provided through specialist DFV accommodation: <i>"this housing provided so much for my wellbeing –I enrolled in TAFE, I am moving on with my life. I feel like I achieved something. If I didn't have this housing probably... get depressed and isolate myself...that would then have an effect on my children... I think that's so significant, housing and wellbeing –I think it is the most important Thing."</i><sup>8</sup></p>	<p><b>Overall assessment:</b></p> <p>High</p>

<sup>7</sup> Co-design report (footnote 4), page 22.

<sup>8</sup> NSW Women Refuge Movement Study (footnote 13)

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Access to support services for residents, to heal and rebuild	Positive	Easy access to knowledge, tools and services needed to heal and recover from trauma, and to rebuild a new stage of life, at a faster rate than without these services.	Under the Core and Cluster model, self-contained accommodation is located next to a 'core', which provides access to services such as counselling, legal assistance, education and employment support, audiovisual equipment for virtual court appearances. Additionally, the development has a trauma focused design including soft lighting, playgrounds and green spaces, soft close doors/drawers, remodelling of apartment configuration to suit family needs.	<b>Level: Likely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Experience of the impact is highly probable once in residence due to the ease of accessing services – in terms of increased knowledge of available services, proximity to those services (in same building or transport direct to service), and advocacy support.	<b>Level: Major</b> <i>Evidence:</i> A long term impact for a vulnerable community group. Overcoming trauma and rebuilding a life requires assistance across a wide range of areas, typically challenging for survivors to access and understand in its entirety. Having the 'administrative aspects' such as legal, financial, Centrelink, physical, and day-to-day practicalities under control, provides residents with the opportunity to turn their energy and attention to addressing personal trauma relating to a history of abuse. <sup>9</sup>	<b>Overall assessment:</b> High
Continued cultural connection	Positive	Approximately 40% of residents are likely to identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. The development provides these residents with the opportunity to have a continued or renewed ability to connect with Country and kin through cultural practices and ways of living. Similar opportunities are provided for women and children who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	The development is designed to provide residents with culturally appropriate spaces, such as interconnecting units for larger families, large outdoor and indoor community and play spaces, native plantings throughout the gardens, an Aboriginal women's yarning circle, and interior design influenced by the local Aboriginal community, including project colour schemes and artwork. Furthermore, all wrap around support services are informed by culturally safe principles and frameworks.	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> The enhancement strategies dramatically increase the changes of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people continuing to stay connected to their culture and Country, as opposed to placement in an institutional setting or shared housing. Concerns for safety, may limit the ability of women and children to have complete freedom to continue cultural practices out in the community or on Country.	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Connection to culture and Country is a significant driver in recovering and rebuilding from trauma.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

<sup>9</sup> Co-design report (footnote 4), page 10-16, Phase 1.

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Continued connection to local community	Positive	Residents can live within their community and stay connected to existing support networks including family, friends and services, and can continue existing employment and education.	Housing Plus specifically selected the location for the development so that is situation within the local community. This location was selected with inputs from DFV specialists endorsed by NSW Police as safe and secure. The accommodation is designed to be culturally safe, as discussed above.	<b>Level: Unlikely</b> <b>Evidence:</b> Where it is possible for women to remain active within their community, location is key to experiencing this impact. However, in practice the ability to remain within their community depends on the circumstances. Thorough risk and safety planning is conducted for every individual to determine safe accommodation needs. If not deemed safe to stay in the community, referrals will be made to facilities outside the community. This is especially the case where the perpetrator has a history of tracking. Even when accommodation can be provided locally, it is often the case that residents refrain from attending work or school for a period of time for both safety and wellbeing reasons.	<b>Level: Minor</b> <b>Evidence:</b> For some families the continued connection to local routine and support from family and friends is a strong contributor to their recovery. For others, the ability to leave their existing network is actually a necessity for recovery. Magnitude of the impact depends on a case-by case basis.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Low

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Feelings of exclusion	Negative	Many people have negative pre-conceived ideas about DFV victim-survivors and the impact that interaction with them will have on themselves and their family. There is potential for neighbours to keep residents at arm's length or treat them poorly. This may result in residents feeling excluded from the community.	The necessary discretion around the location of DFV housing limits the ability to communicate to the community at large. However on-site staff work to build relationships with local neighbours and are able to act as an intermediate where necessary.	<b>Level: Very Unlikely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Typically, while the development address is available through the DA exhibition and some neighbours are aware the development as identified through submissions, the general neighbourhood would not know of the exact location of the DFV accommodation.  There is a potential for some negative connotations to transfer into stigmatisation, however the Orchard has shown that original opposition to the women and children has not resulted in any negative behaviours directed at the residents once operational.	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Experiencing discrimination due to a past experience with DFV, is not only likely to lead to a negative emotional state but may trigger existing trauma and cause a set-back in the process of healing and rebuilding.	<b>Overall assessment: Low</b>

## Neighbours

Table 0-5: Identification, mitigation or enhancement and assessment of social impacts for neighbours

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Increase in crime	Negative	A belief that DFV survivors are from a lower social economic status and more likely to have drug or alcohol related problems or a criminal record, along with belief that perpetrators will follow their families into the neighbourhood.	<p>The development has a number of deterrent and precautionary measures including passive security cameras, car registration plate recognition cameras, safety lighting, providing residents with new phones and education to use technology and social media safely. The provider also has a close working relationship with NSW Police conducting regular reviews on the safety of families and the location of perpetrators. NSW Police were also involved in the site selection and development design. Drug and alcohol dependency is a factor considered when determining the residents who are suited to the service offering.</p> <p>Thorough risk assessment and safety planning is conducted for each family before their placement. Where the perpetrator has a history of tracking, families will be located in accommodation further from their homes.</p>	<p>Level: Unlikely</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Mitigation and avoidance strategies reduce the likelihood of an increase in crime or safety issues relating to the development. This includes the fact that it is difficult for perpetrators to find out where the victim-survivors are located.</p> <p>The Orchard has not led to any increase in criminal incidents in the community in which it is located (Appendix B – NSW Police Force Statement).</p> <p>If residents pose any risk to others, they are provided with a more suitable service offering and will not be accommodated at the development. Thorough risk and safety planning alleviates this risk.</p>	<p>Level: Minor</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Most perpetrators of DFV are under apprehended DFV orders and are known to Police. In the instance that perpetrators did locate their partners, the nature of the crime means they are only interested in their former partner and not wider opportunistic crime that would impact broader community members.</p>	Overall assessment: Low

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Reduced sense of safety	Negative	Neighbours fear that the safety of themselves, their families, and the broader neighbourhood due to the perceived backgrounds and nature of people impacted by DFV.	<p>Due to safety measures, the location of a DFV accommodation service is not publicly promoted which limits broad communications or engagement with neighbours. However, any individual or organisation who directly contacts the owner or service provider with questions or concerns will be provided with an opportunity to express their concerns or questions and receive reliable information or responses.</p> <p>Housing Plus and the providers participate in a number of activities to support mutually positive relationships with neighbours. This includes conversations with residents about what being a good neighbour entails and building open relationships and channels of communication with close neighbours (through staff). Community engagement and education is ongoing to facilitate an understanding of the gendered nature of violence and how to support victim-survivors.</p>	<p><b>Level: Unlikely</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>While some fear might currently exist due to assumptions or misconceptions, the impact may become less likely to occur as neighbours come to understand the type of residence and experience that any increase in crime or risk to safety is unlikely to be a reality.</p>	<p><b>Level: Minor</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Even if unlikely to occur the perceived risk to safety will have some impact to the mental state of neighbours, albeit reducing over time. Prior to operation, the Orchard had similar concerns raised by neighbours (total of 19 opposing submissions). These concerns have diminished overtime as neighbours experienced the reality of The Orchard in their community / neighbourhood.</p>	<p><b>Overall assessment:</b></p> <p>Low</p>

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Change to neighbourhood character and visual amenity	Negative	The scale and nature of the development (considered medium density) is not compatible with the existing low density residential area. A development of this nature is not only visually out of place in a neighbourhood of singular family houses but will also change the feel of the neighbourhood. Many owners in the area chose their home due to this 'family estate' character and do not want to see it changed.	The development has been designed specifically to fit in with the character of neighbouring properties and meet local council guidelines and regulations. The location, landscaping and boundary treatments are designed to offer privacy both for neighbours and the residents.	<b>Level: Unlikely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> While the Core and Cluster model is different in form to the single dwelling houses in the area, the mitigation strategies and compliance with regulations make it unlikely that the development will alter the overall character of the neighbourhood.	<b>Level: Minimal</b> <i>Evidence:</i> While slightly different to the single dwelling houses that surround it, the mitigation strategies reduce the impact to the overall character of the neighbourhood as a family friendly estate is limited and any visual impacts.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Low
Frustration and lack of trust with the development stakeholders	Negative	Neighbours feeling they have had the opportunity to voice their concerns or influence the outcome of the DA, due to not being properly consulted through the planning stages. Neighbours feel that there has been a lack of transparency and honesty throughout the process impacting the relationship between local community and Housing Plus / the provider.	Due to safety measures, the location of a DFV accommodation service is not publicly promoted which limits broad communications or engagement with neighbours. Housing Plus and the service provider aim to overcome this frustration by building long-term relationships of trust as a good neighbour. Once operational, onsite staff can meet and talk directly to any neighbours with a concern.	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Submissions indicate that community members feel frustrated that they have not had the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process ahead of the DA being released. And many interpret that as a lack of good faith and honesty on Housing Plus's behalf.	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> A poor relationship with the developers may negatively impact the relationship between residents and neighbours (assessed under stigmatisation above) or create more opposition to future developments by Housing Plus.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

Drop in value of property	Negative	Perception that the development will reduce the value of surrounding properties.	<p>In the interests of all stakeholders, neighbours and residents; Housing Plus has purposefully designed the development to complement surrounding development; inline with relevant guidelines and regulations.</p> <p>We acknowledge that impact on surrounding property values is of significant concern to neighbours in close proximity to Group Homes, particularly in the Planning Stage.</p> <p>Accordingly Housing Plus actively monitors market sales in close proximity to an existing Orchard (Group Home) in Orange. Agent feedback from two (2) sales of homes situated within 100m-200m of the Orange Orchard in 2023 are noted below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern 4-bedroom residence situated in the same street as the Orchard; on the market for 21 days. The location of the Orchard to the property was not a factor in the agents pricing, and in their opinion not a factor in the eventual price. To highlight this, only 1 of the 19 parties that looked at the property (&lt;6%) noted the Orchard to the selling agent. This highlights that the location of the development is not broadly known in the market/population of the city.</li> <li>Modern 4-bedroom dwelling on the market less than 30 days. Agent enquiry indicated that the proximity of the property to the Orchard did not negatively impact the marketing or sale price of the property. &lt;10% of people who looked at the property mentioned the Orchard.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Level: Unlikely</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Our experience in Orange with the Orchard; indicates that the value of surrounding properties is not impacted by its presence or operation. Rather, our market enquiry indicates that broader population of Orange and market likely doesn't know where DFV accommodation is; and if they do, it does not impact their purchasing decision nor the price paid.</p> <p>Submissions from residents have referenced studies or research showing property near group homes have diminished value, however no source or referencing for this research was provided. If founded it is possible these studies only relevant to group homes housing higher risk residents as opposed to women and children who are affected by DFV.</p>	<p><b>Level: Moderate</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>A loss in financial value of real estate is of high importance to neighbours and would result in an impact. The magnitude of that impact to overall wellbeing may be experienced less intensely than if the demographics were lower socio-economic status or a vulnerable subgroup.</p>	<p><b>Overall assessment:</b></p> <p>Medium</p>
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Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
			<i>We specifically highlight that in the interests of protecting the location of the Orange Orchard and its residents; we are not able to disclose the addresses, prices or sale dates of the market sales noted above; nor the agents who managed the sales.</i>			
Increase in traffic and parking issues	Negative	Increase in traffic and difficulties in parking due to the addition of 9 units instead of a single dwelling, and the comings and goings of staff and service providers.	The off-street parking meets the requirements of regulations and guidelines, which are based on local Council knowledge and expertise.	<b>Level: Unlikely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> As families affected by DFV typically have to leave quickly and privately, they will only have one car per family, if at all. Staff and service providers will use onsite parking and will never be present in large groups due to the focus on a calm and safe environment.	<b>Level: Minor</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Given the small increase in traffic due to staff and service providers, the change experienced by neighbours is likely to be mild, if noticeable. And these impacts will be limited to business hours when the majority of neighbours are at school or work. The impact on parking is negligible as most homes have off-street parking.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Low

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Change in the use of the development	Negative	Concern that the use of the development could be changed to one of Housing Plus's other services without consultation or Council approval. Particular concern is if the development is used to accommodate one of the community groups who poses a higher risk to community safety, such as people recently released from prison, people experiencing homelessness or drug and alcohol problems and people with a mental disability.	Any potential change to the use of the facilities would undergo the development application process and allow community members to provide submissions.	<b>Level: Unlikely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> While Housing Plus intends to continue to use the development for the purposes of DFV accommodation, the use of the group home is tied to funding arrangements and is open to changing.	<b>Level: Major</b> <i>Evidence:</i> If the use of the development was to change in a manner that caused an increase in negative impact to residence, it is possible the magnitude of the impact could be substantial in many ways. Any potential change to the use of the facilities would undergo the development application process and allow community members to provide submissions.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

## Broader community

Table 0-6: Identification, mitigation or enhancement and assessment of social impacts for the broader community

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Addressing the need for DFV solutions in the community	Positive	The rate of DFV incidents (reported) in Singleton is 10% higher the NSW average. The development reduces these crimes by providing safe and secure accommodation and services to women and children living in and around Singleton.	N/A	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> More than 10,000 Australian's experiencing domestic violence are unable to access emergency accommodation due to lack of supply. <sup>10</sup> While not providing a full solution to the need for DFV accommodation in the region, the development does address the need for a percentage of women and children in the area and may provide a successful model for future developments.	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> While the number of residents impacted is limited, the development is based on successful trials of the Core and Cluster model, providing residents in Regional NSW not only with an opportunity to leave environments of violence, but access to leading practice solutions that have previously only been available in larger cities.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium
Reducing the impact of DFV crimes on the broader community	Positive	The long-term impacts of DFV encompass health, economic and social consequences. For example, chronic health conditions, mental health challenges, inability to sustain employment or housing. Experiences of DFV also led to intergenerational impacts on children and without intervention, can perpetuate cycles of violence. <sup>11</sup> Providing solutions to DFV reduces the impact of these consequences on the community and its resources.	N/A	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> As explored above under the Residents impact section, once accommodated residents are more likely than alternative models to recover and rebuild their lives with sustainable outcomes for parents and children.	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> DFV is recognised as a major contributing factor to homelessness and housing instability, particularly for women and children. <sup>12</sup>	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

<sup>10</sup> Statistic taken from AIWH (2018). Specialist Homelessness Annual Report 2017-18.

<sup>11</sup> Co-design report (footnote 4), page 4.

<sup>12</sup> Spinney, A., Blandy, S., and Hulse, K., Preventing homelessness for women and children who have experienced Domestic and Family Violence. Research and Policy Bulletin, 2013(164).

Potential impact	Positive or negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance
Comfort that vulnerable women are supported in their community	Positive	Comfort or satisfaction that evidence-based services exist for women and families within their community to leave their unsafe homes and receive support.	N/A	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Many people may remain unaware of the specifics but feel comforted that vulnerable women in their community are provided for.	<b>Level: Minimal</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Those with lived experience or understanding of the impact of DFV will feel immense comfort, however the majority of the broader community will only experience little noticeable change.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Low
Perpetrators criminally charged	Positive	Residents are more likely to report their experiences, and perpetrators be held accountable for their DFV offences (and therefore less likely to be able to reoffend).	N/A	<b>Level: Possible</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Police statement confirming the Orchard has supported women to report DFV incidents, when they would otherwise not have felt able to.	<b>Level: Major</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Perpetrators are identified, deterred and prohibited from re-offending within the community.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> High

## Service providers

Table 0-7: Identification, mitigation or enhancement and assessment of social impacts for service providers

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance of impact
Ease of providing services	Positive	Providing services to a fixed address and free from the threat of violence is easier than meeting women in temporary shelters or when they are able to leave the home. The ease of providing services may lead to issues and challenges being resolved earlier and faster due to consistency and ease of contacting the family.	Each provider works according to Operational Management Plans, Charter and Guidelines that provide a framework for provision of services. Specific policies and procedures are in place to ensure appropriate governance and compliance, workplace health and safety, and privacy and confidentiality, with the aim of increasing the safety of women and children affected by DFV.	<b>Level: Likely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> The practicalities of having safe, physical location to provide services makes this impact likely to occur.	<b>Level: Minor</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Service providers are able to provide women and children with more holistic, consistent support, that is tailored for their family and circumstances, from their first day at the development.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> Medium

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance of impact
Improved access to information and collaboration	Positive	Service providers are able to receive the history and relevant information from a case manager or other support service, rather than retraumatising women by asking them to repeat their story.	Housing Plus ensure all providers of the Core and Cluster model have policies and procedures in place, including working arrangements in line with the DV NSW Good Practice Guidelines.  While these policies and procedures do allow for the ease of providing information, with the intent of creating better outcomes for residences, information is only shared with the consent of the individual. <sup>13</sup>	<b>Level: Likely</b> <i>Evidence:</i> Policies and procedures in line with the DVNSW Good Practice guidelines apply Principle 7 around collaboration to ensure this impact is likely to occur. <i>Collaboration principle 7: Services are committed to actively engaging with the local service ecology and improving the outcomes of victim-survivors, including children, through coordination, collaboration and integration that provides continuity of care.</i>	<b>Level: Moderate</b> <i>Evidence:</i> The many aspects of life that are impacted by DFV requires broad and varied support services to address, currently found in siloed and institutional service providers. This placing a large burden on both service providers and women to repeatedly source or provide the same information. The sharing of key information lifts that burden, reduces frustration and speeds up the process of seeking support. <sup>14</sup>  Having a central case manager also allows for a holistic approach to a survivor's recovery and transition, ensuring no aspect is overlooked and referrals or introductions are made to service providers at the right time.	<b>Overall assessment:</b> High

<sup>13</sup> Compliant with NSW Government's DFV Information Sharing Protocol, and Part 13A of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW).

<sup>14</sup> Co-design report (footnote 4), page 10-16, Phase 1.

Potential impact	Positive / negative	Description of impact	Mitigation or enhancement by Housing Plus	Assessment of impact		
				Likelihood	Magnitude	Significance of impact
Increased burden on emergency services	Negative	Linked to the potential increase in crime (whether perceived or real) is the perception that the residents will require greater policing and an additional burden on already limited community resources.	Police are involved in the site selection and design of the development to ensure it not only meets safety requirements but reduces any potential burden on their resources.	<p>Level: Unlikely</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>As evidenced in the Neighbours section above, an increase in crime is highly unlikely to occur due to the presence of the DFV accommodation.</p>	<p>Level: Minimal</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>DFV occurs in the privacy of homes, behind closed doors. As a result, emergency services are called out to investigate or act on DFV offences that are reported by victims or neighbours. Due to the level of safety measures in place at the development, it is likely that attending to any disturbances at the development would be less of a burden on the emergency services than being called to a private property.</p>	<p><b>Overall assessment:</b></p> <p>Low</p>
Strain on local schools and recreational facilities	Negative	Neighbours perceive there may be a reduction in the quality and availability of services for children living in the neighbourhood due to an increased need for the services from the residents. Concerns raised of increased strain on teachers and local staff of such facilities.	Housing Plus and service providers work with any schools or recreational providers to ensure all safety risks are managed. This may include having staff accompany children to school, and providing school with instructions on who can or cannot come into the school or interact with the children. Otherwise, all interaction with school remains as normal unless children are removed entirely.	<p><b>Level: Very unlikely</b></p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>Local children living within the accommodation are most likely to continue with their current schooling or to be temporarily pulled out of school for safety reasons. Children who have travelled from their school are very unlikely to be enrolled in a local school, day care or activities as their focus is on working with their family to recover and transition to new long-term accommodation.</p>	<p>Level: Minimal</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i></p> <p>No evidence of an increased burden on local schools or recreational facilities or activities has occurred at other Housing Plus group homes. If a child was to join a local school or activities, they would be the exception and in very small numbers.</p>	<p><b>Overall assessment:</b></p> <p>Low</p>

## Proposed social impact management

Housing Plus, along with their selected service provider, has the abovementioned strategies to avoid and mitigate any potential negative impacts and enhance positive impacts. Housing Plus recognises that while this evidence based planning and preparation is critical to managing potential impacts for the community and residents, ongoing active management is also required as the development becomes an operational Core and Cluster accommodation model for women and children affected by DFV.

They will achieve this by:

- Actively monitoring and, where necessary, responding to the potential impacts as they become a reality.
- Providing avenues for key stakeholders to confidentially share concerns, ideas or ask questions
- Ongoing social impact evaluation

## Monitoring and responding to impacts

Housing Plus will work with the service provider to monitor impacts and ensure all avoidance, mitigation and enhancement strategies are in place, or improved where required. This is achieved in the following ways:

- The service provider and Housing Plus have a Deed of Intention outlining the roles and responsibilities related to safety planning and working together that cover the implementation of the strategies covered in this document.
- Housing Plus and the service provider have a joint risk management plan and framework, along with policies and procedures, to monitor and mitigate negative impacts relating to the operation of the development.
- Housing Plus maintains a separate risk management plan, framework, policies and procedures in relation to the development beyond operational management.

## Avenues for feedback from impacted groups

Housing Plus will ensure that all potentially impacted groups referenced in this document have access to avenues to provide feedback, ideas, concerns and ask questions. This includes:

- Establishing policies and processes that identify a commitment to responding to and working to resolve (so far as is practically possible) customer feedback and complaints, implementing changes, and avenues for external review or appeal.
- Implementing and communicating these opportunities and avenues to residents, neighbours, broader community members, and service providers.
- Where appropriate, responding to direct requests for factual and evidence-based information relating to the development and its use as a Core and Cluster model refuge for women and children affected by DFV.

## Ongoing social impact measurement and evaluation

Housing Plus, in collaboration with any stakeholders and service providers, actively evaluates the social impact of its work and vision of improving people's lives through independence and choice with a focus on regional NSW.

An independent evaluation on The Orchard was conducted in May 2022 and, where appropriate, can be provided on request. Housing Plus also works with Social Value Bank Australia to understand the net benefit of its programs at an organisational level, with findings publicly available on the Housing Plus website. Housing Plus is committed to understanding its social impact and implementing changes to support continuous quality improvement processes.



## Conclusion

The purpose of this document is to provide parties considering the development application for the Housing Plus Core and Cluster development with an understanding of the potential positive and negative social impacts relating to the development. Decision-makers can then use this information when considering approval of the application in its entirety.

Social impacts were considered in relation to four groups who may be impacted in some form. This included residents; neighbours; broader community; and service providers.

Potential positive and negative impacts have been detailed and the overall significance assessed for each group.

This SIS demonstrates that:

- the development provides highly significant positive social impacts for residents - a vulnerable group of the community who are otherwise underserved. This positive impact indirectly extends to the broader community group, albeit at a less significant level of impact.
- DFV service providers are also likely to experience significant positive social impacts due primarily to the Core and Cluster model that underpins the design of this development. This assessment of impact is the justification of why the NSW Government is funding and supporting the implementation of Core and Cluster DFV refugees around the state.
- Where they exist, potential negative impacts are most likely to impact direct neighbours. On balance, these negative impacts are either unlikely to develop, or result in a low level of magnitude for nearby neighbours where they do eventuate. Where appropriate and possible, Housing Plus and the service provider have put in place several strategies to mitigate any neighbourhood impacts, for example through design and collaboration with stakeholders such as the local Council or Police. It has not been possible to completely remove all negative impacts, due to a need to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the women and children affected by DFV.

The low level of impact on neighbours is evidenced through the successful implementation of Housing Plus's current Core and Cluster DFV accommodation, The Orchard, which has continued to deliver positive outcomes since commencing operations in 2020.

A holistic assessment of social impact indicates a likely **positive social impact resulting from this development**. The level of positive impact for vulnerable women and children affected by DFV is significant, compared to any likely negative impacts experienced by the nearby neighbours.

## Appendix – A: Design Guide

[Click here](#) to access the full document.



## Appendix B – Police Statement (Orange, NSW)

19 February 2024

Ms R Bohun  
Acting Director  
Community Services - Housing Plus  
Byng Street  
ORANGE NSW 2800



Dear Ms Bohun,

### Housing Plus Orchard Orange

Since opening in 2020, the Housing Plus Orchard Orange facility has supported many women and children across our communities. Providing a safe and supportive accommodation option for families involved in Domestic Violence situations.

Through partnership with the NSW Police Central West District the Orchard Orange has supported many women who would not have otherwise felt able to report Domestic Family Violence. Resulting in perpetrators being held accountable for their use of violence, or other domestic violence offences.

The Orchard has not created any increase in incidents in the community in which it is located and is a valued facility.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Gorman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brendan Gorman  
Superintendent  
Central West Police District  
bg:kg

### Central West Police District

115-117 Byng Street, Orange NSW 2800

T 02 6363 6399 F 02 6363 6321 W [www.police.nsw.gov.au](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au)

TTY 02 9211 3776 for the hearing and speech impaired ABN 43 406 613 100

**TRIPLE ZERO (000)**

Emergency only

**POLICE ASSISTANCE LINE (131 444)**

For non-emergencies

**CRIME STOPPERS (1800 333 000)**

Report crime anonymously