Safe at Home

Changing the narrative: Early intervention in family violence as homelessness prevention

Jocelyn Bignold OAM

CEO, McAuley Community Services for Women



Safe at Home trial

- A co-designed family violence response that prioritises homelessness prevention through early intervention
- The whole-of-family approach includes specialist support for people who use violence
- It focuses on a partnership model that delivers coordinated response and has created system-level changes that prioritise women and children to remain safely in their home



Safe@Home

Partnerships

- Led by **McAuley**
- **Meli** is the primary service delivery partner
- **University of Melbourne** is the evaluation partner
- Legal and financial support is provided for victim survivor through **Westjustice** and **Barwon Community Legal Service**
- **First Step Legal** provide specialist legal assistance for people who use violence.



- All have membership on Governance Group *plus* **Police, Child Services & lived experience**

Safe@Home McAuley MeLI Westjustice Barwon COMMUNITY LEGAL FIRSTSTEP THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Program Data (1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026)



Safe@Home

Exit from Safe at Home – Yearly snapshot

56%
Households separated during Safe at Home.

56%
Adult victim-survivors risk decreased.

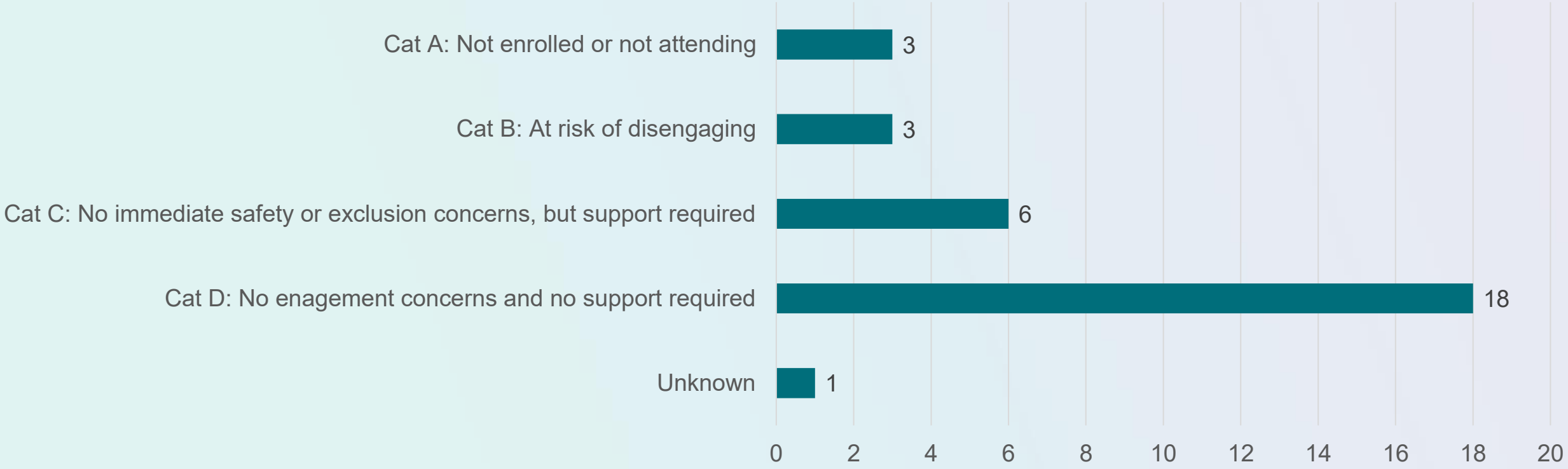
89%
Adult victim-survivors remained in their home.

130 days
Average support period.

Safe@Home

School Access Risk

58% of children and young people were attending school without additional support



Engagement of Men

Level of Engagement	PUVs	%
Not invited Adult VS did not consent or risk deemed too high	15	56%
Not engaged No contact or refusal to participate	3	11%
Limited engagement Inconsistent, externally driven contact; limited accountability	4	15%
Participating Regular involvement in the SAH response & agreed actions	4	15%
Active change Sustained engagement; responsibility-taking & behaviour change effort	1	4%

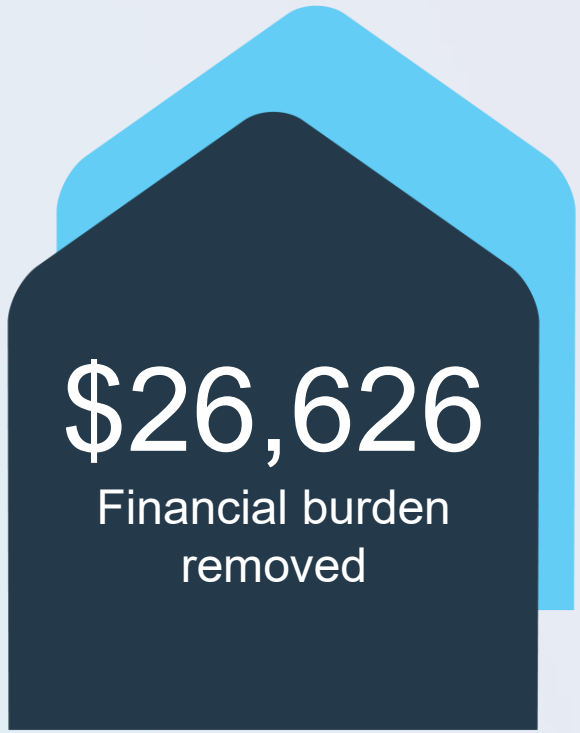
3 men referred into **First Step Legal**

Revised intake approach increased invitations to men to participate from 17% in Q1 to 50% in Q4.

Restoring Financial Safety



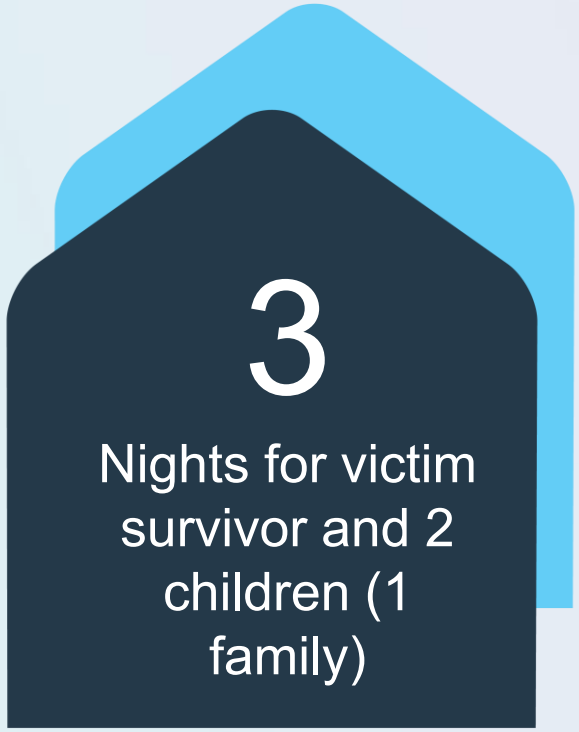




Safe@Home

Crisis accommodation provided





Safe@Home

Safe at Home Feedback

100%
Report progressing towards their goals.

100%
Feel safe working with Safe at Home.

100%
Feel supported to connect to community.

100%
Are satisfied with the Safe at Home response.

Safe@Home

What have we learnt so far?

- Challenges have included:
  - Defining what early intervention means
  - Legal complexities
  - Managing the complexity of operational partnerships
  - Building in new whole of family practise frameworks into family violence response.
- Importance of embedding lived experience through the appointment of a Peer Worker,
- Addressing children's needs requiring a dedicated Children / Young People Practitioner.

Safe@Home

Key recommendations

1. Invest in integrated whole-of-family responses as a national family violence model.
2. Prioritise earlier intervention and outreach before crisis, homelessness and system escalation.
3. Recognise housing stability, homelessness prevention and women's economic security as core family violence outcomes.
4. Recognise and invest in children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.
5. Build a coordinated and sustainable system that reduces re-traumatisation and strengthens accountability.

Safe@Home