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Apartments idea Crisis accommodation

Plan to help domestic violence survivors

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It is one of the lesser-known problems confronting the domestic violence sector.

Where do women and children go when they can no longer take refuge in temporary crisis accommodation?

In The Hills Shire Council, developers of apartment blocks could soon be providing the answer.

Under a state-first initiative, developers will be offered bonus floor

space to build extra apartments, providing a number of units within the complex are retained as transitional housing for 10 years.

Mayor Yvonne Keane said there was a "chronic shortage" in The Hills area for transitional housing, which serves as an intermediary step between crisis shelter and permanent housing.

The lack of transitional housing meant women were at a greater risk of returning to violent homes once their time in emergency shelters was up, often after a maximum

three-month stay. "We can actually solve this problem and it won't cost the community a cent, it won't cost government a cent and it won't cost developers a cent in the end. It's a win-win for everybody."

The policy is designed to take advantage of the expected apartment boom around the Sydney Metro Northwest stations and shire centres over the next two decades.

The scheme is capped to prevent overdevelopment, meaning developers can build up to nine units beyond the area's planning controls

for an apartment complex comprising at least 50 units, so long as three of the units are kept as transitional homes for up to 10 years.

Cr Keane said she first approached council staff with "this kind of crazy idea" over 12 months ago, after being attuned to the transitional housing crisis through her work as chair of a women's shelter called The Sanctuary.

After months of consultation and fine-tuning, the policy was approved unanimously by the elected council in July and submitted to

the Department of Planning for approval this month.

The council announced a Transitional Housing Alliance on Monday that includes developers Mirvac and PAYCE, as well as community housing providers.

"Major developers like PAYCE have run the numbers over the proposal and believe it is a viable approach to help provide the subsidised housing that council is encouraging," said Chris Johnson, chief executive of developer lobby Urban Taskforce.



Essential

