



MOSMAN HOUSE

From Vacancy to Lasting Impact: A Meanwhile Use Housing Case Study.

WOMEN'S
COMMUNITY
SHELTERS



TWILIGHT
AGED CARE



Link
Wentworth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Women's Community Shelters, Twilight Aged Care and Link Wentworth acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters.

Specifically, we acknowledge the Borogegal and Cammeraigal people as the traditional custodians of the land on which 'Mosman House' provided safety and support.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations peoples.

We honour their strength, resilience, and enduring wisdom, recognising the deep and sacred connections to land, waters, and community connections that have existed for tens of thousands of years and continue to be unbroken.



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THE PARTNERSHIP

Safe, stable housing is the foundation on which lives are rebuilt. Yet across New South Wales, more people are experiencing homelessness than ever before, and demand for safe, supported accommodation remains at an all-time high. Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated response - no single organisation or sector can do it alone.

Mosman House was established in response to this reality, grounded in a shared belief that underutilised buildings can - and should - be part of the solution. Delivered through a meanwhile use housing model, the project activated a vacant aged-care property for a defined period to meet the need for urgent housing. While the program focused on older women (aged 50+), the outcomes demonstrate relevance to the broader housing system. Over five years, *Mosman House* delivered safety, stability and pathways for women who might otherwise have remained without options, demonstrating the impact of well-designed, time-limited solutions.

At the heart of this success was collaboration. *Mosman House* was made possible through a genuine **three-way partnership between Women's Community Shelters, Link Wentworth and Twilight Aged Care.** Each organisation brought distinct expertise and responsibilities, united by a common purpose. Together, we demonstrated that when service providers, housing partners and property owners work in alignment, complex issues such as homelessness can be addressed in practical and effective ways.

This partnership reflects a broader truth: **homelessness is an all of society issue.** Responding to it requires cooperation across community, government and the private sector, and a willingness to see assets and opportunities differently. The *Mosman House* initiative illustrates how collaboration can unlock latent housing capacity - aligning underutilised properties with immediate housing needs, without compromising future use.



Importantly, *Mosman House* was **temporary by design**. From the outset, it operated within clear timeframes and governance, balancing the need to create more safe housing for homeless older women with the needs of Twilight Aged Care, the landowner. Its closure in 2025 marks the successful completion of a defined chapter, one that delivered brighter, safer futures to 57 older women, while respecting the building's next use.

This report documents what was achieved through *Mosman House* and the lessons learned along the way. It is intended to be not only a reflection, but an invitation: to consider how meanwhile use housing can be applied again elsewhere, and how collaboration across sectors can continue to support broader responses to homelessness.

We are proud of what was achieved and grateful to the partners, stakeholders and supporters who made it possible. Most importantly, we acknowledge the women who trusted *Mosman House* as a place of safety when they were navigating homelessness and uncertainty.

This case study is a call to practical action: **we must urgently work together to create more places of safety, because responding to homelessness requires all of us to do more, now.**



Annabelle Daniel OAM
CEO, Women's Community
Shelters



Niamh Mannion
CEO, Twilight Aged
Care



Andrew McAnulty
CEO, Link Wentworth

THE PROBLEM

THE CHALLENGE WE FACE



Mosman House, October 2020 | Volunteers from Link Wentworth, Temple & Webster, and Mosman Council preparing and painting the space during a community working bee.

Across Australia, empty and underused buildings exist alongside unmet housing need.

Every night, more than **120,000** people experience homelessness, with older women among the fastest-growing cohorts affected. Housing insecurity is often compounded by domestic and family violence, limited income, and a lack of suitable alternatives.

While long-term housing solutions are essential, thousands of people need safety and stability now.

"I feel blessed to finally get a break so I can breathe again"

- Former Mosman House client

WHY MEANWHILE USE HOUSING

A PRACTICAL SOLUTION RIGHT NOW

Meanwhile use housing activates vacant or underutilised buildings while longer-term plans progress.

Meanwhile use housing is:

- ▶ Efficient and cost-effective
- ▶ Time-limited and flexible
- ▶ Supportive of future development
- ▶ Aligned with government-endorsed housing responses
- ▶ Provides bright, safe and secure futures for residents

Meanwhile use housing is an efficient, pragmatic and timely response to the housing crisis.



CASE STUDY MOSMAN HOUSE

2020 - 2025



Mosman House communal living space.

Mosman House provided crisis and transitional accommodation for women experiencing homelessness.

Location

Mosman, NSW

Clients

Women aged 50+

Years of Operation

October 2020 – December 2025

Model

Time-limited
Meanwhile use housing

Transitional housing provides safe, short- to medium-term accommodation for people experiencing homelessness or leaving crisis situations. It bridges the gap while offering support to help residents move toward independence and permanent housing



FROM VACANCY TO OPPORTUNITY

RETHINKING EMPTY BUILDINGS

In late 2019, Twilight Aged Care ceased private hospital operations at its Mosman site. With the building no longer fit for purpose, it entered a redevelopment planning phase, creating a period of unavoidable vacancy.

As COVID-19 emerged in early 2020, homelessness was exacerbated, underscoring the urgent need for safe, secure housing. Rather than leave the site unused during this period of heightened vulnerability, Twilight identified an opportunity to temporarily activate the asset in a way that aligned with its mission and values.

Supported by Mosman Council, Twilight partnered with Women's Community Shelters and Link Wentworth to establish Mosman House in mid-2020. Originally intended as an 18-month interim solution, the project extended to five years due to planning delays associated with the site's scale and heritage considerations.

During this time, the former hospital became a safe, welcoming home for women experiencing homelessness. The building remained occupied, well maintained and actively managed, operating without disruption to the local community.

Outcomes

- Immediate housing impact for women aged 50+
- Reduced vacancy risk and lower security and insurance costs
- Positive community and reputational outcomes
- Future redevelopment fully preserved through a time-limited, reversible arrangement

I couldn't believe places like this existed... In four months, I've made so much progress...



I'm going to get a tattoo that says, "Eat My Fear."



***These places are too few;
we need more of them.***

- Former Resident at Mosman House

HOW MOSMAN HOUSE CAME TO LIFE

A COLLABORATIVE MODEL

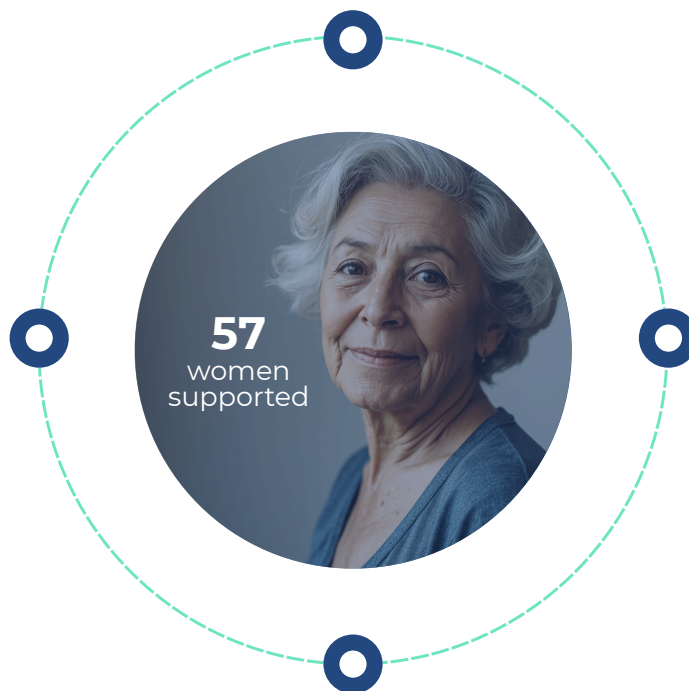
Mosman House was made possible through a unique partnership.

Women's Community Shelters

Service provider: provided onsite wraparound and personalised support to residents

Temple & Webster

Furniture provider: Supported the collaboration by furnishing *Mosman House* pro-bono, helping to create a calm, welcoming and restorative space.



Link Wentworth

Community Housing provider: supported the project with property maintenance and tenancy management for residents.

Twilight Aged Care

Landlord: provided a vacant, 18 bedroom property, as safe housing during their development process.

This collaboration allowed a vacant building to be activated quickly, responsibly and with clear deliverables for all parties.

We thank **Northern Beaches Women's Shelter** who, as part of the WCS network of safe havens, supported the project and managed the case management support from 2020-2024.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

WHAT MOSMAN HOUSE DELIVERED



25,530

Approximately 25,530 safe bed nights provided at *Mosman House* over the five year period



84%

84% of *Mosman House* clients went on to safe and secure housing

AGE RANGE

of the 57 women supported

50

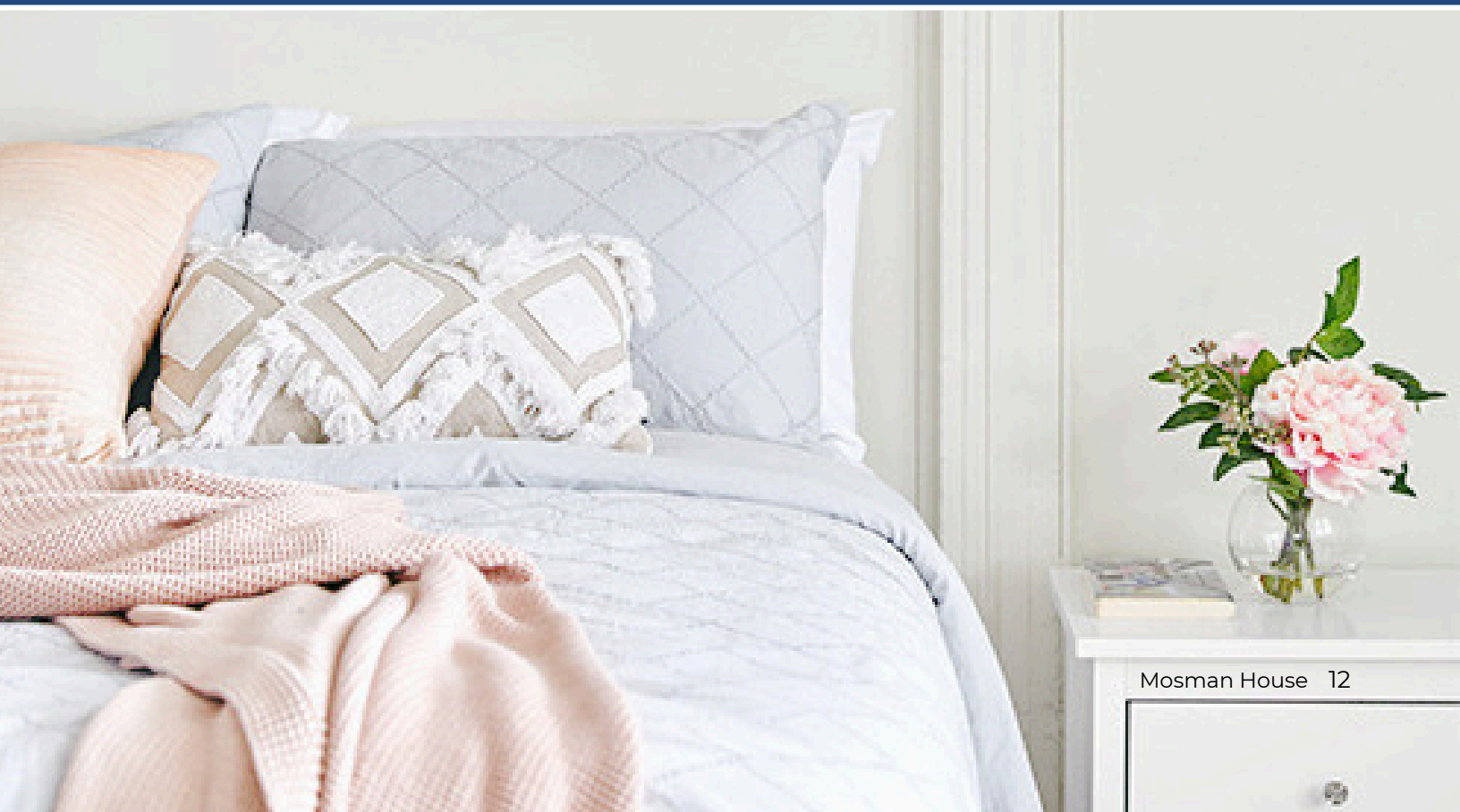
YOUNGEST



81

OLDEST

Mosman House residents averaged **59** years of age, with some women as old as 81, highlighting the increasing exposure of older people to housing insecurity.

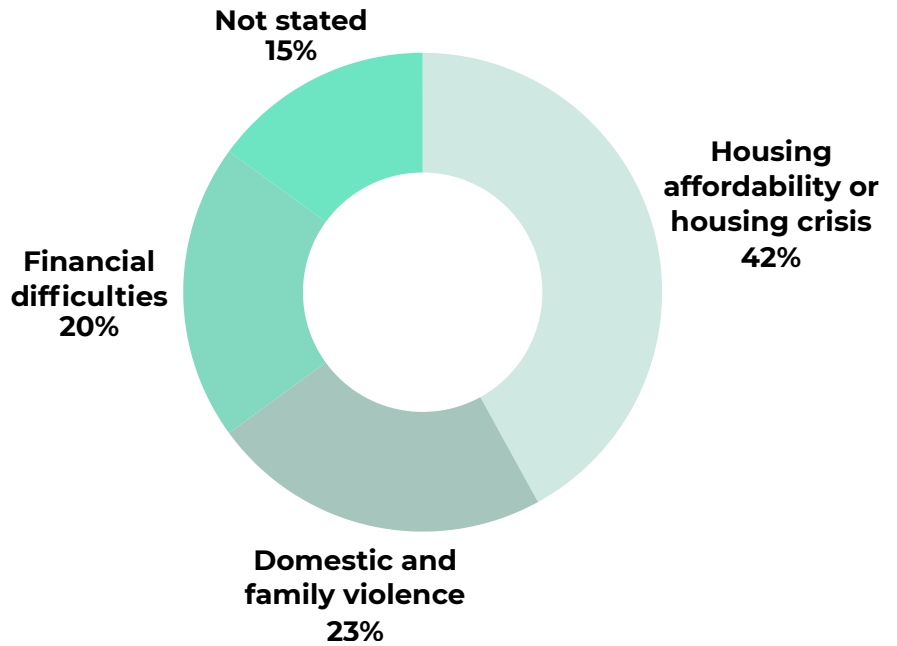


INSIGHTS

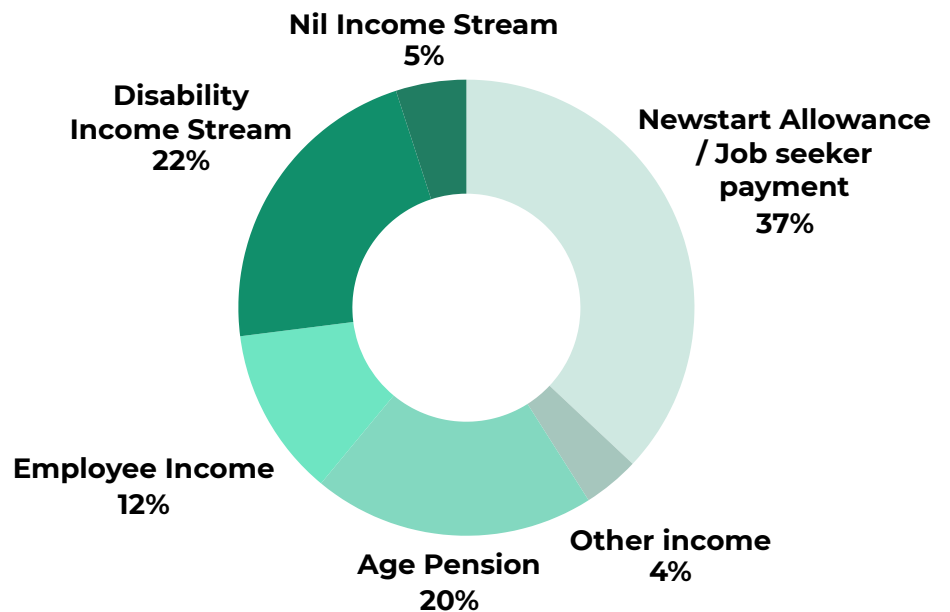
UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

These insights highlight the compounding vulnerabilities older women face when accessing safe housing.

Residents presented for a range of reasons, most commonly:



Income on entry varied significantly, with many women reliant on minimal or fixed incomes.



THE ECONOMICS

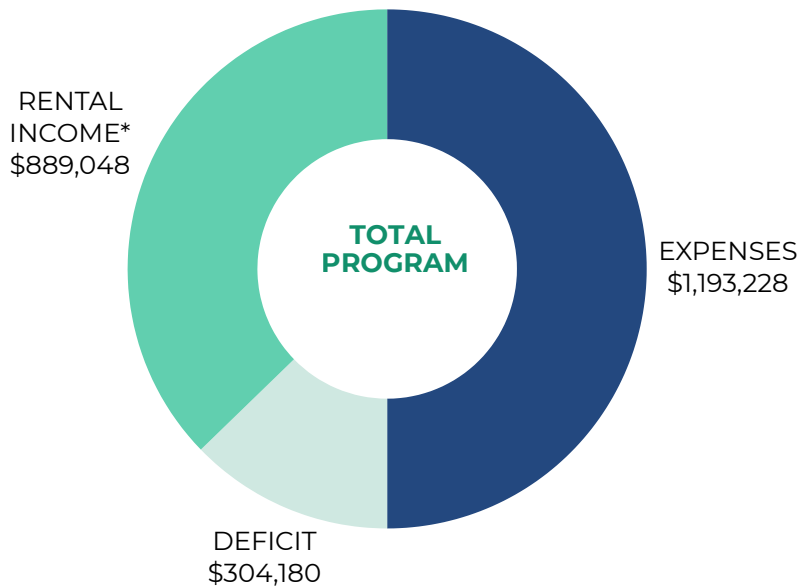
LOW COST, HIGH IMPACT

\$ TOTAL PROGRAM INCOME/EXPENSE

Total five year program cost:
\$1,193,228

Average annual cost:
\$238,646

Average annual deficit:
-\$60,836



*Clients contributed on average \$244 per week toward their stay at *Mosman House*.

EXPENSE BREAKDOWN[^]



General Property Expenses

Utilities, water, rates, Link
Wentworth staff costs

\$380,144



Property Maintenance

Planned & responsive
maintenance, damages

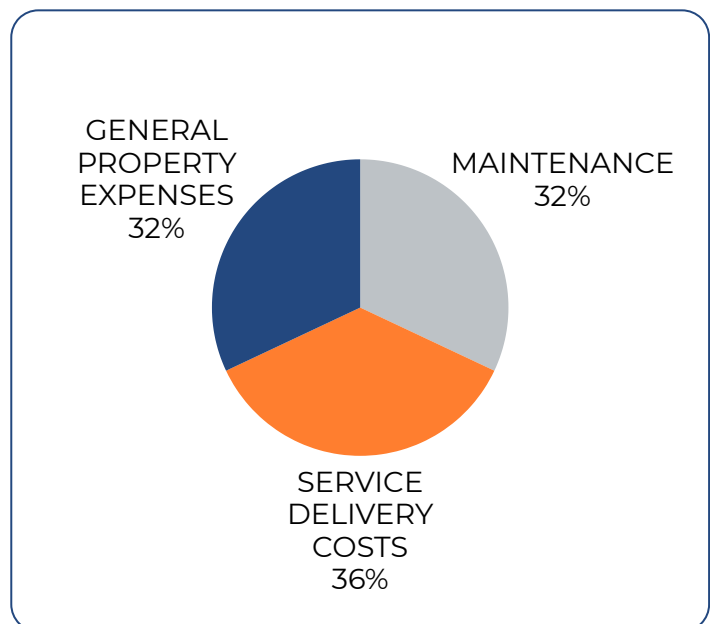
\$375,748



Service Delivery Costs

Client support

\$437,336



[^]Pro bono furniture provided by Temple & Webster is not included in these costs.

THE ECONOMICS

LOW COST, HIGH IMPACT

1=1 UNIT METRICS



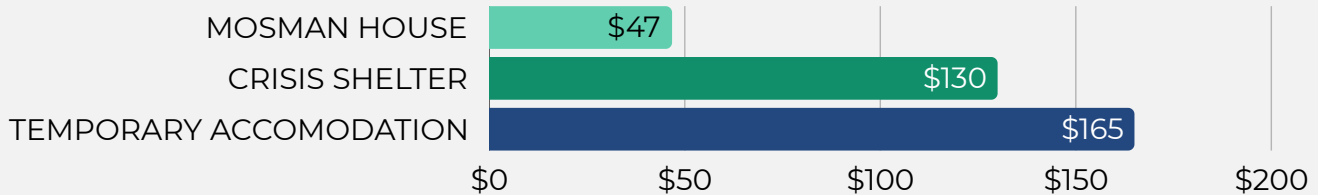
78%
OCCUPANCY RATE

Of the total 32,850 safe bed nights available during the five-year project **25,530 were provided**

\$46.75

COST PER BED NIGHT

A low, cost effective amount to provide a safe and supported bed to a vulnerable woman for a night = **just under \$330/week**



KEY FINANCIAL LEARNINGS

- With a cost of **\$46.75 per bed night**, *Mosman House* operated at a fraction of the cost of WCS's 2025 average crisis shelter bed night (\$130) and significantly below the sector average for temporary accommodation (\$165).
- On average, **clients contributed \$244 per week** toward their stay at *Mosman House*.
- A key component to keeping costs down were the **significant pro bono partnership contributions** by corporate partners, such as Temple & Webster.
- **Benefits to Twilight Aged Care through building occupancy** included reduced insurance costs, reduced risk of vandalism and squatters and building upkeep.
- *Mosman House* demonstrated **systems-level savings through cost avoidance** through (likely) reduced hospital bed nights, emergency service interaction and reliance on high-cost crisis accommodation.
- With the general sector trend of increasing client complexities, there may be a need for greater staffing resourcing for future projects.

KEY LEARNINGS

WHAT WE LEARNED



Meanwhile use housing works and benefits all parties involved



Vacancy can become an opportunity



Transitional housing solutions can drive long-term housing outcomes



Housing responses can be humane, practical and scalable

These learnings strengthen the future application of meanwhile use housing models across NSW.

INSIGHTS FROM CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES

Connection and Community

were critical to success: Relationships built within *Mosman House* and the surrounding community helped strengthen and build client confidence and a sense of belonging.

Social Connection

outlasted the program itself: Many former residents remain in contact, reflecting the enduring impact of stable, shared accommodation.

CLOSURE

Mosman House was intentionally established as a time-limited project. Its closure reflects delivery as planned, not failure.

Closure was built into the model, allowing for an urgent housing need to be met with upside for the property and all partners.

Temporary by design, successful by measure.

Property Protected

- No damage to the property from vacancy
- Returned ready for next use
- No delays to owner's development plans

Planned, Not Abrupt

- Closure known in advance
- Coordinated exit process
- Clear timelines for all parties

Residents Supported

- All residents offered long-term housing opportunities
- Personalised support provided through the transition period

Stakeholder Confidence

- Landlord goals respected
- Community obligation met
- Project concluded with trust intact and an appetite to partner again

A good social project doesn't just start well, **it ends well.**

Mosman House delivered urgent and safe housing, protected the asset and concluded **responsibly.**

BENEFITS & CONSIDERATIONS

BENEFITS

- **Immediate activation** - Vacant buildings can be brought online quickly, providing safe accommodation while longer-term plans progress.
- **Time-limited by design** - Meanwhile use housing works within defined timeframes, respecting future redevelopment or property plans
- **Cost efficient delivery** - The model prioritises practical, low-overhead service delivery without long-term construction or acquisition costs.
- **People-centred outcomes** - Residents benefit from stability, dignity and time to transition to secure housing.
- **Shared value** - Property owners, governments and communities benefit from activation, care and positive social impact.

CONSIDERATIONS

- **Not a permanent solution** - Meanwhile use housing complements, but does not replace, long-term housing supply.
- **Clear exit planning required** - Defined closure dates and transition pathways are essential from the outset.
- **Partnership-dependent** - Strong collaboration between service providers, landlords and housing partners is critical.
- **Replicability varies by site** - Each building requires tailored assessment, approvals and support models.

This report outlines the benefits and considerations of meanwhile use housing, which activates vacant buildings for social good. While it offers immediate, cost-effective solutions, it requires careful planning and strong partnerships and should be recognised as a temporary, not permanent, approach.

THE INVITATION

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Mosman House demonstrates that this meanwhile use housing model is replicable - not because of a unique property, but because of how it was intentionally designed, governed, and delivered.

Across the property sector, buildings regularly sit vacant while awaiting approvals, staging, or sale. At the same time, demand for safe, short-term accommodation continues to far exceed supply. **These two realities are not separate problems - they exist side by side.**

Meanwhile use housing provides a practical, immediate way to connect them. It offers a structured, time-limited approach that delivers safety and stability for residents, while allowing future plans for an asset to proceed without compromise.

Suitable properties are often those:

- ▶ Awaiting development approvals
- ▶ Between project stages
- ▶ Held pending sale or repositioning
- ▶ Expected to remain vacant for 18 months or more

Through clear partnerships, experienced providers manage day-to-day operations, compliance, and resident support, operating within defined governance frameworks and agreed exit timeframes. Risk is shared, impacts are measurable, and outcomes are tangible.

The question is no longer whether this model works. The question is how often, how boldly, and how quickly it is applied again.

This report calls on the homelessness and housing sectors, landowners, developers and government to lean in to the meanwhile use housing model - thoughtfully, collaboratively and at scale - so that vacant space is no longer accepted as inevitable while people remain without safe places to live.

If you'd like to learn more about Mosman House, or further explore how the meanwhile use housing model could work in other contexts, please get in touch.

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