

Organisation Letter Head

[[Insert Date]]

Dear [[Full Name]] MP

RE. Serious funding threat to Victoria's Neighbourhood Houses

My name is [[Full name]], I am a [[member/participant]] of [[Name of Organisation]] in [[Suburb]], one of over **400** Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria.

I am writing to you, in the lead up to the Victorian State Election, to make you aware of the serious funding shortfalls leading to 46% of Victorian Neighbourhood Houses running at a loss for each of the last two years and an unprecedented number of insolvencies across the sector. Without urgent restoration of the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP) funding, we could see a dramatic cut to local support services and community development, and significant job losses.

As you may be aware, 401 Victorian Neighbourhood Houses receive core funding from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) through the NHCP.

The NHCP was designed to cover a manager's wages and operational costs, but due to inadequate indexation over many years, the NHCP doesn't even meet the costs of employing a manager, with nothing left to keep the lights on and the doors open.

Years of underfunding mean too many Houses are operating with limited staff and stretched resources, despite growing demand and a rise in community members presenting with complex issues, including mental health crises and instances of violence. In 2024–25, communities lost the equivalent of \$230 million in benefit when activity funds were diverted to basic operating costs. Houses are being forced to cut open hours, reduce programs, or fundraise just to turn on the lights.

Unless government acts, more doors will close — and communities will lose trusted, safe and inclusive spaces they rely on every day. This will be particularly devastating for the 185,000 Victorians who visit Neighbourhood Houses each week.

Our asks of the Victorian State Government:

1. **Urgently restore funding to historical levels through a 25% increase.**
2. **Support 25 Neighbourhood Houses who do not currently receive any ongoing funding.**
3. **Develop a fund for the establishment of 5 additional Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria's growth areas annually.**
4. **Increase Neighbourhood Houses Victoria's core funding from \$300,000 to \$500,000 per year.**

The restoration of that funding will ensure the future of a sector that provides:

- 5,900 jobs and 12,000 volunteer roles
- \$921 million in measurable community value — a \$11.02 return on every \$1 invested
- Over 426,000 group activity sessions and 10,400 referrals
- Over 244 tonnes of food relief each month
- Support for 5,945 other community groups

The work of Neighbourhood Houses has significant impact on so many areas that determine quality of life for Victorians including combatting loneliness and social isolation, mental and physical health and wellbeing, and poverty and disadvantage. They support people from a diverse range of backgrounds including disability, migrant and refugee communities, people experiencing family violence, and help people gain core skills for employment. Importantly, they strengthen community cohesion and belonging.

There are also at least six Aboriginal-run Neighbourhood Houses which provide important healing spaces for Aboriginal Victorians to preserve their culture and histories, access culturally safe supports and services, and which empower mob through connection, education, and self-determination. A number of these are directly at risk.

The Bottom Line

Neighbourhood Houses deliver enormous social and economic value. But with the NHCP rate 20% lower than a decade ago, open hours have dropped to their lowest level in 10 years.

It's simple: without sustainable funding, our doors will close. With fair funding, we will continue to be the safe, welcoming places every Victorian community needs.

What we're asking of you:

We would appreciate you writing a letter to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers, Ros Spence MP at Ros.Spence@parliament.vic.gov.au, urging her to restore funding to Neighbourhood Houses and keep our communities strong.

We also urge you to talk to your parliamentary colleagues, gather support and stand up for Neighbourhood Houses and Networks.

If you would like to offer a public message of support, please contact our state peak body Neighbourhood Houses Victoria at info@nhvic.org.au.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you and would welcome a visit from you in the near future to learn more about the important work that we do in our local community.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]