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## **More housing to tackle the scourge of homelessness among the elderly launched in the Geelong region**

**New units open thanks to an innovative collaboration between the Alexander Miller Estate, Wintringham Housing and State Government.**

A housing project for elderly people experiencing homelessness was officially opened today at Highton, near Geelong, by Victorian Member of Parliament, Minister Melissa Horn.

The project sees the development of fit for purpose accommodation for 22 elderly people experiencing disadvantage, including those who have found themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This development adds to the existing 34 homes on the Highton site and 171 homes that have already been developed under this collaborative model across Geelong and more widely Regional Victoria.

The project was established from a gift of funding and land from the Alexander Miller Estate as well as funding from the Victorian State Government. The property and services will be managed by Wintringham, who have unique experience in advocating for, and supporting, elderly people experiencing disadvantage.

The Alexander Miller Estate contributed cash funding over \$3.25 million and land worth a commensurate amount, with the Victorian Government contributing over \$7.33 million.

The Alexander Miller Estate is a perpetual charitable trust which was established in April 1914. Mr Miller set up the Trust for the purpose of relieving poverty in Geelong and regional Victoria. Trustees for the Trust have aimed to fulfil this purpose in a meaningful and practical way by purchasing land and building, maintaining, managing and endowing cottages or other homes for use by those experiencing disadvantage and poverty.

Today the Alexander Miller Estate, as a charitable trust, owns multiple properties occupied by residents who are usually over 50 years of age and who have lived experience of homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, and require support to maintain a place to live.

Wintringham is a not-for-profit welfare organisation that has worked to support older Victorians at risk of homelessness for more than 30 years and is Australia's largest provider of aged care services to older people experiencing homelessness. The organisation is first and foremost focused on providing people with the dignity, rights and options to ensure they have the support and housing to live the life that they deserve.

Gary Martin, Chair of Trustees of the Alexander Miller Estate, said: "It's this genuine commitment from all parties to dedicate our time and resources to not only create purpose-built homes across regional Victoria, but to ensure the residents have access to the services and support they require to successfully maintain their tenancies and a good quality of life, that truly makes this partnership exceptional."

Bryan Lipmann AM, CEO and Founder of Wintringham Housing, said: "The new units will provide much needed social housing in a region that is experiencing significant housing stress. It means more accommodation will be made available alongside our existing housing, which means we can provide the support services that often make all the difference to clients living the life they deserve."



“The new units are designed to optimise natural ventilation and light and provide a space that fosters a community of support and encouragement. Providing a healthy, comfortable and safe place to live is our priority, and we hope the new residents will love living there as much as their neighbours in the adjoining properties do.”

Jodi Kennedy, General Manager Charitable Trusts and Philanthropy at Equity Trustees, said: “We are proud as a co-trustee, to be a part of ensuring Alexander Miller’s commitment to the Geelong region is demonstrated in a real and practical way, driving positive outcomes for those in the community who need it.

“Given the critical need for housing supply at this time, it’s very rewarding to see the collaborative partnership between the Alexander Miller Estate, the Victorian Government and Wintringham Housing, come to fruition through this development.”

### **Starting a new life in social housing**

When Theresia moved into her new home at the Alexander Miller Wintringham homes in Highton she said she regained her dignity and feels at peace.

“I loved using my skills through volunteering as a social worker; I was always helping others. I never dreamed for one minute that I would be the one in need of a home myself. When a mini tornado hit my rental property that I’d been living in for 19 years, it was the beginning of what felt like the end for me.

“I am a mother of six, grandmother of 19, and great grandmother of nine. I am lucky that I had my children to help me, I couch-surfed and lived with my children and grandchildren for a few months, but they too had their own challenges and life pressures to deal with.

“I lived out of a suitcase and the only possessions I had with me were my clothes and toiletries. I spoke to Denise my Case Manager from Wintringham and put on a brave face and said that I was doing ok, but I was far from it.

“Being homeless for me meant that I lost my sense of self, my sense of identity, and to be honest, I didn’t care if I was here anymore. I was at a very low place. Having always been in command of my life, this loss of identity affected me so deeply; I never felt like this before. As you get older your resilience isn’t what it used to be. I was so desperate for help.

“After moving into Wintringham I feel like I’m regaining my identity, and I’m resuming the activities that I love so much like ballroom dancing. I now have a home for life. You have no idea what a huge impact that can have on a person and their outlook on life.

“I can’t stress how important it is to give people the opportunity to maintain their dignity and sense of self, while also being respected as an individual. Having my own home now and the right support structures around me, means that I somehow feel whole again, and ready to share my skills with others in whatever way I can.”

View Wintringham’s work and why they do it [here](#).

### **MEDIA INQUIRIES**

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