



# The Advertiser

## Women vote too’: Protests over Catherine House cuts at SA Parliament

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Hundreds of people – women, men and children – rallied at the steps of Parliament House on Saturday chanting “No Cuts to Catherine House; Women vote too”.

Catherine House general manager Julie Duncan told the crowd that the team had been humbled by the outpouring of community support.

She suggested cuts may have been an “unintended outcome” of reform and hoped funds would be reinstated before July 1.



Labor leader Peter Malinauskas with MPs Nat Cook, Lucy Hood and Katrine Hildyard at the Justice4Women SA rally. Picture: Emma Brasier



Former Catherine House residents Maddie, Losa and Sandy. Picture: Emma Brasier

“We’ve reached out to government reached out to the new consortium, to see whether we can find a solution to keep funding the service,” she said.

“We’ve made our case and we’re awaiting an opportunity to try and negotiate a solution.”

But Human Services Minister Michelle Lensink told Sunday Mail discussions were underway.

“The South Australian Housing Authority is in talks with Catherine House to explore the opportunity to continue services,” she said.

She accused Labor of using the state’s most vulnerable people as a “political football”.

“Any accusation that our most vulnerable men and women experiencing homelessness will not have access to services, including crisis accommodation and support, is blatant fearmongering – and we really urge people to check the facts,” Ms Lensink said.

“Under the reforms, homelessness funding is increasing and our most vulnerable will continue to get the help they need, but we unashamedly

want better, long-term outcomes so people stop cycling in and out of the system.”

Labor Human Services spokeswoman Nat Cook MP, who attended the rally along with Labor’s Peter Malinauskas, Lucy Hood, Katrine Hildyard and Irene Pnevmatikos, said Ms Lensink’s comments were appalling.

“There is nothing but uncertainty leading into winter,” Ms Cook said.

“The opposition is amplifying the cries from the sector because the government simply isn’t listening.”



Maddie is a former client of Catherine House which is losing \$1.2m in State Government funding.  
Picture: Keryn Stevens

‘My whole life I’ve been treated like a burden’

Maddie’s impression of a homeless person was they were always old and male.

That stereotype was shattered when, aged just 19, she found herself couch-surfing and also fighting for survival on Adelaide’s streets.

The now 21-year-old was homeless for five months after the student accommodation where she lived and worked, at North Adelaide, closed



permanently with just a weeks' notice – and a fortnight before Christmas 2019.

But life changed when she was referred to Catherine House's crisis-intervention service which gave her a roof over her head, hot meals and a safe place until she was able to move into community housing in August 2020.

Maddie was among speakers at a Parliament House rally yesterday, demanding the State Government reverse funding cuts that it is feared will put women at risk of further violence and discrimination. Maddie said she would have died without Catherine House's support.

“My whole life I've been treated like a burden, and like I'm not worth help,” she said.



Protesters at the Justice4Women SA rally on the steps of the Parliament of South Australia.  
Picture: Emma Brasier

Maddie said she was shocked by the timing of the cuts – coming into effect in midwinter