

## **Federal Budget delivers no relief for women and children experiencing violence**

Women's organisations applaud the increasing focus on violence against women at the Federal Government level but are disappointed by the lack of funding for primary prevention initiatives and specialised domestic and family violence and sexual assault services in the 2015-16 Commonwealth Government budget.

"It is disappointing that the political leadership that was demonstrated during the Coalition of Australian Governments meeting in April has not been translated into funding for specialised women's services that provide vital support to women and children who experience violence" said Fiona McCormack, CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria.

Since January this year, two women have been killed every week as a result of violence against women. Domestic and family violence cost the Australian economy an estimated \$13.6 billion. If appropriate action is not taken this is expected to rise to \$15.1 billion in 2021-22. The Government response to the epidemic of violence against women must be proportionate to these social and economic costs.

"The extension funding of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the ongoing funding of the National Affordable Housing Agreement are welcome inclusions in the budget" said Helen Dalley-Fisher, Program Manager of the Equality Rights Alliance. "However, this funding is still not sufficient for services to meet growing demands and women and children will continue to be turned away."

"The guarantee of current overall levels of funding for Community Legal Centres until 2017 has provided some relief" said Michael Smith, Chair of the National Association of Community Legal Centres. "However, with a new commonwealth funding model, cuts to some Community Legal Centres that support women experiencing family violence are now expected in at least three states. This is on top of an already dire situation for Community Legal Centres who are already turning away 150,000 people each year."

"The allocation of \$16.7 million towards the Coalition of Australian Governments National Awareness Campaign to Reduce Violence Against Women provides an opportunity to target the root cause of violence against women – gender inequality and the devaluing of women and girls." Said Dr. Caroline Lambert, CEO YWCA Australia. "However, there is a need for additional funding for primary prevention initiatives that prevent this violence from occurring in the first place."

"There is concern across the women's sector that funding for anti-violence initiatives lacks transparency and cohesion." said Julie Oberin, Chair of the Australian Women against Violence Alliance and Womens Services Network. "Why does the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children not appear as a dedicated funding stream in the Commonwealth budget?"

If the Federal Government is serious about turning rhetoric into action it needs to use the mechanism of the National Plan to consolidate the funding of anti-violence against women initiatives and the reporting of results under those initiatives.

RELEASED BY: THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE ALLIANCE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTORIA, THE EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES, WOMEN'S SERVICES NETWORK, YWCA AUSTRALIA.

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