

MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal budget must address critical gaps in frontline domestic violence services

The Morrison Government has committed to doubling its spending on women's safety to \$227 million annually (\$680 million over three years), but women's safety bodies say a [\\$1 billion](#) per annum investment is needed to close the gaps in frontline domestic violence services.

"We've never really tried making domestic abuse services universally available", said Hayley Foster, chief executive of Women's Safety NSW. "There are currently many services which are underfunded or simply not available Australia-wide."

"We wonder why domestic and sexual violence rates aren't coming down, but truly, how can we expect women to leave violent and abusive relationships when we're not ensuring they have access to safety and support? And how can we break the cycle?"

In NSW, the most critical service gap identified by frontline domestic and family specialists is [case management](#), but there are serious gaps right across the service system.

Depending upon where you live and what the waiting lists are like in one's area, Women's Safety NSW estimates or understands:

- [9 out of 10 women](#) experiencing violence who want to be supported to stay safe at home, are not able to access such services;
- [1 in 3 women and girls](#) seeking accommodation to escape violence are unable to be housed;
- Women in half of the local court areas in NSW do not have access to women's legal services. (Based on a survey of 44 respondents from [Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services](#) and other women's services across 134 of the 138 local court areas of NSW);
- [Women in half of the local areas of NSW](#) do not have access to a women's health centre;
- [Children in half of the local areas of NSW](#) do not have access to child-focused domestic and family violence case management services; and

- Men in 20% of local court areas of NSW do not have access to accredited men's behaviour change services (Based on a survey of 46 respondents from [Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services](#) and other women's services).

Additionally, there are a whole range of positively evaluated federally-funded family, domestic and sexual violence services, such as the [Family Advocacy Support Services \(FASSs\)](#) in the Family Courts, the [Domestic Violence Units \(DV Units\)](#) in Legal Aid Commissions, [Health Justice Partnerships](#) in health-related settings, and [Coordinated Family Dispute Resolution Services](#) in family support settings, all of which have been recommended for expansion, yet continue to maintain pilot status. This means access to critical safety services are not available to all Australian women and children, depending upon their postcode.

Women's Safety NSW acknowledges the increased commitment of the Morrison Government to women's safety but notes the announcement falls short of what is needed to afford universal access to life-saving family, domestic and sexual violence services.

"It's positive to see the Federal Government recognise the urgent need to invest more in women safety", said Ms Foster. "This is a good start and if invested in the right interventions, will significantly improve the safety of many Australian women and children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence."

"However, we still need to see a four-fold increase in this figure if we want to ensure all Australians can access the services they need to achieve safety in the face of domestic and sexual violence and all communities equipped with the tools and resources to prevent such violence occurring in the first place."

"This is about recognising the magnitude of this problem as the single biggest preventable driver of premature death, disability and illness in Australian women aged up to 45 years of age and that domestic and sexual violence services are not a luxury, but an absolute necessity."

About:

Women's Safety NSW is a peak representative body for women's specialist domestic and family violence services. Our purpose is to advocate on behalf of our members for women's safety, justice and wellbeing in the context of domestic and family violence through policy, practice, law reform and cultural change.



Advocating for freedom
from violence

Our full members – Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services – supported 51,383 women across NSW last year through:

- NSW's integrated response to domestic and family violence, Safer Pathway, in 43 metropolitan, regional and rural locations;
- The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program in 117 local courts across the state; and
- The Family Advocacy Support Service in Family Law Registries.

Our associate members are employed with a variety of other women's specialist domestic violence services including staying home leaving violence, women's health, women's counselling, women's supported accommodation, and women's legal services.

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Frontline domestic and family violence specialist workers also available for comment on request.