



## GENDER LENS ON THE 2024-25 BUDGET

<b>Key Policy in Discussion</b>	<b>Reducing violence against women</b>
<b>Portfolio and or Agency</b>	<b>Multi Agency</b>
<b>Data Issued</b>	<b>26 May 2024</b>
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### Key Portfolio Issues

Arguably the most anticipated federal budget investments for 24-25 financial year were in family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV). Following [28 violent deaths of women](#) in the first quarter of the year – a rate of one woman murdered every four days – Australian women and their allies took to the streets in mass protests calling on the Federal Government to do more to end men’s violence against women. Timed ahead of a special meeting of National Cabinet focussing exclusively on FDSV, protests called for increased investment into the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. With the [Australian Institute of Criminology](#) reporting a 28 per cent increase in intimate partner homicide over the last 12 months , the Prime Minister identified gendered violence as a “national crisis”, raising expectations of significant budgetary investment.

On 1 May 2024 following a National Cabinet meeting, the [Federal Government announced a pre-budget FDSV financial support package](#) of \$925.3 million over five years, with the majority of investment continuing and expanding two pilot programs - the Escaping Violence Program (EVP) and the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot. While these investments were welcomed as a good start to supporting victim-survivors, both the quantum allocated and the manner of procurement – small payments of \$5,000 directly to victim-survivors via cash and vouchers - was criticised by service providers, who expected to see a demand-based boost to specialist service provision, whole of system improvements and justice investments.

The National Foundation for Australian Women is a feminist organisation, independent of party politics and working in partnership with other women’s organisations. NFAW is dedicated to promoting and protecting the interests of Australian women, including intellectual, cultural, political, social, economic, legal, industrial and domestic spheres.

The Budget itself, released two weeks later, has not greatly added to the pre-budget announcements. While there are welcome innovations in online safety and the security of women on university campuses, very little further investment has been made to support the FDSV sector.

## **Budget Measures**

### **FDSV - Response Services**

#### ***Direct Financial Payments to victim-survivors***

The single biggest investment in FDSV in the 2024-25 Budget is the Leaving Violence Program (LVP) with \$925.2 million in direct financial support to victim-survivors of intimate partner violence. The funding of \$5,000 in financial support to help people experiencing intimate partner violence to leave the relationship includes up to \$1,500 in cash and up to \$3,500 in goods and services, along with referral to other services, risk assessments and safety planning for up to 12 weeks.

An additional \$6.1 million over four years has also been allocated to the Department of Home Affairs to provide specialist support for visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence through the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP).

#### **The Leaving Violence Program – financial support for victim - survivors of intimate partner violence**

Payments (\$m)

	2023/-24	2024/-25	2025/-26	2026/-27	2027/-28
Department of Social Services	-	198.6	185.2	251.4	257.5
Department of Home Affairs	-	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>200.1</b>	<b>186.7</b>	<b>252.9</b>	<b>259.1</b>

Budget Paper No. 2 p.176

### **Assistance for Migrant and Refugee Women**

Within an allocation of \$27.0 million over three years of targeted support, settlement services continue to receive funding for refugee and migrant women experiencing DFV as part of *Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program*. While the investments save the program from lapsing, [this investment has been identified as a funding cut by the Settlement Council of Australia who received \\$29.3 million over three years in the 2022/23](#).

### **Reforms to Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services**

Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Services Australia	0.3	..	-	-	-
Department of Home Affairs	-	35.4	37.1	23.0	23.5
Department of Health and Aged Care	-	0.4	0.6	0.7	..
Total – Payments	0.3	35.8	37.7	23.7	23.5

Budget Paper No2. p. 138

### **Assistance for First Nations Families**

The Attorney-General's portfolio has funded an extension of the First Nations Family Dispute Resolution pilot to support culturally safe family dispute resolution services with \$11.7 million over two years. This program supports selected Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to provide culturally appropriate alternative family dispute resolution to clients, including recruitment and training of staff and modification to delivery approaches to offer more culturally appropriate services.

### **Enhancing First Nations Justice Policy Outcomes**

Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Attorney-General's Department	-	8.6	8.4	2.6	2.8
Federal Court of Australia	-	5.7	5.6	4.8	4.1
Australian Law Reform Commission	-	0.2	0.3	-	-
Total – Payments	-	14.5	14.3	7.4	6.9

Budget Paper 2. p. 48

### **Trauma-informed family violence services – expanding the GP Pilot in the Central Coast**

\$6.0 million of the women’s health budget has been allocated to a local outreach trauma-informed service for women and children experiencing DFV or homelessness, based in the Central Coast. The Primary Care Pathways to Safety: the Readiness Program - the Hunter New England Central Coast Primary Health Network (HNECC PHN) is an initiative focused on getting help to people experiencing DFV faster through collaboration between GP practices and specialist DFV sectors. [This pilot was independently evaluated in 2023.](#)

#### **Women’s Health**

Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Department of Health and Aged Care	-	21.3	18.1	8.8	5.1
Services Australia	-	2.0	0.3	0.3	0.2
Total – Payments	-	23.2	18.5	9.1	5.3

Budget Paper No. 2. p. 132

No other funding was provided to specialist family violence services in the Budget. There was also an absence of funding to sexual violence services, despite the establishment of the [Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence](#) and [Ministerial round table on addressing sexual violence](#). Further, there was no additional funding to the [Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission](#), even while emergency roundtables between Commissioner Micaela Cronin and the sector were being called (See also Machinery of Government).

#### **FDSV - Primary Prevention for Ending Gender-based Violence**

With rising perpetration, primary prevention approaches are in the national spotlight with some academics and commentators opening up debate about [Our Watch](#) and the broader sector’s focus on attitudinal and behavioural change on gendered norms and stereotypes. The Prime Minister, in his [International Women’s Day Breakfast speech](#) in Parliament House on 7 February 2024, observed “addressing family violence cannot begin and end with efforts to achieve gender equity or economic equality. We have to go deeper than that”.

The Budget sets out how the Government intends to begin the deepening process by allocating \$1.3 million over two years to review targeted prevention approaches to violence against women, with a panel of experts to provide advice to Government on preventing gender-based violence, including a focus on homicides.

There is \$9.6 million over five years in additional resourcing to inform policy advice to Government to end gender-based violence. It includes a healthy \$3.9 million in additional resourcing for the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to identify whole of government opportunities to respond to gender-based violence and continue to embed a focus on women’s safety across Government, as well as funding of \$4.3 million to commission [Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety](#) to further build the evidence base on pathways into and out of perpetration of family, domestic and sexual violence. Following record investments in Our Watch in 2023-24, it is not surprising to see no additional investments this year.

**Ending Gender Based Violence – additional resourcing**

Payments (\$m)	202324	202425	202526	202627	202728
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	0.4	1.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
Department of Social Services	-	4.3	-	-	-
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Budget Paper No. 2. p. 157

Some targeted primary prevention investments have been made in areas of innovation.

***Primary Prevention Action in the Tertiary Sector & National Student Ombudsman***

The Budget allocates \$18.7 million of funding over four years to the development of a new National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence as well as \$19.4 million to a National Student Ombudsman to hear complaints about gender-based violence on campus and other student concerns, as part of the Australian Universities Accord. The funding of a tertiary focussed gender-based violence program follows decades of student advocacy, led by the National Union of Students Women’s Department, on the need for security for women on campus.

## Australian Universities Accord – tertiary education system reforms

### Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Services Australia	0.3	0.2	-	-	-
Department of Education	-	34.4	146.5	172.7	199.8
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	-	14.0	15.0	20.9	22.9
Department of Health and Aged Care	-	9.6	5.2	1.5	2.1
<b>Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman</b>	-	<b>8.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	nfp	nfp
Australian Skills Quality Authority	-	1.3	-	-	-
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency	-	0.5	-	-	-
Australian Taxation Office	-	0.5	..	-	-
Attorney -General's Department	-	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2
Department of Social Services	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>177.6</b>	<b>195.2</b>	<b>224.9</b>
<i>Related receipts (\$m)</i>					
<i>Australian Taxation Office</i>	-	-	..	..	..
<i>Department of Employment and Workplace Relations</i>	-2.9	-13.8	-9.6	-10.4	-10.5
<i>Department of Education</i>	-18.9	-90.7	-17.0	-29.4	-35.3
<b>Total – Receipts</b>	<b>-21.8</b>	<b>-104.5</b>	<b>-26.6</b>	<b>-39.8</b>	<b>-45.8</b>

Budget Paper No. 2. p.62

## Online safety – preventing sexism and misogyny

To address the prevalence of extreme online sexism and misogyny, and the normalisation of gender based violence, \$6.5 million has been provided to develop a pilot of age assurance technologies to protect children from harmful online content. The investments will be provided to build on the [eSafety Commissioner's work](#) under the [Online Safety Act 2021](#).

### Online Safety

#### Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-	6.5	-	-	-
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	0.6	0.8	-	-
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

Budget Paper No. 2. p. 150

## **Gender implications of this budget measure**

### **A national emergency budget - falling short of expectations**

With the exception of a small number of primary prevention innovations and commitments to continue lapsing programs, the Budget has not lived up to victim-survivor or specialist service sector expectations of a national emergency budget.

The combination of high profile, murders of women, along with proximity to the judgment in the [Lehrmann v Network 10 Pty Ltd \[2024\]](#) defamation litigation, served to remind masses of Australian women of the demands made of government for change, in the wake of the 2021 March4Justice protests. There continues to be a gap between the public expectation of investment and the will to allocate funds within the budget for this purpose.

### **Quantum of Investment in FDSV**

The quantum of investment in gendered violence prevention and response has been historically low. Despite persistent advocacy, the amount of funding continues to impoverish services, increase waiting lists and stall workforce development and capacity building.

Once, billion dollar investments in gendered violence would have been noteworthy. But gender responsive budgeting is improving whole of budget transparency and sums of money once noteworthy for the FDSV policy area – such as the \$1.1 billion investment pledged in 2024-25 – are no longer seen as sufficient to address the complexity of the problem, nor in comparison to other budgetary investments.

### **Insufficient Investment in Primary Prevention**

Australia has led the world in health-based harm prevention, with brave interventions and investments to reduce skin cancer deaths, tobacco harm and injury, and death on our roads and in workplaces.

Neither the Federal Government nor any state or territory invest best practice amounts into primary prevention of violence. The independent review into primary prevention approaches needs to focus not just on the *effectiveness of their focus* (addressing both contributing factors to violence, such as stress, financial loss, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems as well as gendered based key drivers of violence) but also the *effectiveness of funding levels*.

One of the impediments to funding primary prevention effectively is the challenge in assessing FDSV investment across multiple departments. Health-based prevention initiatives benefit from being traditionally siloed into one federal department. FDSV investments are whole of government initiatives – where everyone (and no-one) is responsible. Minter Ellison Lawyers recent report, [Funding the Fight Against Domestic Violence](#), identified the lack of consolidated reporting of FDSV expenditure as a significant barrier to progress on prevention.

It concludes that multi-year budget announcements, inconsistency across budget documents and between what is announced and what is actually implemented means “there is no clear way to track FDSV (sic) expenditure”.

The report also identifies that investment is too low, with FDSV expenditure over the last ten years going from “virtually nothing” to an amount that is still less than 0.1 per cent of total budget expenditure. The Minter Ellison Report is aligned to Gender Lens Australia’s inaugural [Gender Budget Watch Report](#), which found extremely low levels of investment in women and gender equality (including FDSV) at both federal and state and territory levels.

### **Direct payments to victim-survivors**

The success of lived-experience advocacy within the FDSV sector, the shift to individual case management in experiences of MyAgedCare and NDIS, as well as rising demand, has resulted in a shift towards individualised rather than service level funding for FDSV.

The \$925.2 million Leaving Violence Program builds on the Escaping Violence Program (EVP) and the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP) established by the Morrison Government. Both the EVP and the TVP programs were procured to faith-based institutions, with generalist welfare experience, rather than specialist FDSV services. EVP went to [UnitingCare](#), to assess individual eligibility of victim-survivors for funding, while TVP went to the [Australian Red Cross](#).

[An independent assessment of the EVP](#) found 60,000 individuals had accessed the \$5000 individual payment since 2021, 95 per cent of them women and 80 per cent self-referred. While the program originally envisaged service delivery support to victim-survivors would be undertaken by specialist family violence services, the high numbers of self-referred clients resulted in an evolution of the original EVP service delivery model, with Uniting Care developing a full case work service, with time and cost implications.

While flexible support packages like LVP, and its EVP and TVP predecessors, improve victim-survivors experiences of entry into the service system, delivering on “no wrong door” commitments, the current structure of EVP/TVP means they cannot be accessed through specialist FDSV practitioners.

Women choosing specialist support cannot seek the funds without navigating through another NGO operator. This is especially concerning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who made up 28 per cent of clients on the EVP pilot program. Indigenous women in FDSV crisis need wrap around, culturally safe and individually tailored support and it is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait women receive culturally appropriate support from their providers of choice. Migrant and refugee women also deserve the same service experience.

LVP is a welcome announcement, as long as the funding enables a truly “no wrong door” service experience, delivered through specialised FDSV services with capacity to address the intersectional gender needs of victim-survivors. At the same time, specialist services must be provided with adequate additional funding to do this. There is concern in the sector that this will be another instance of being asked to do more on an already inadequate funding base.

Further, the LVP funding will need to address other criticisms of the pilot scheme about the lack of timeliness of the support and a 50 per cent failure rate of applications.

Further information regarding the legal assistance aspects of the LVP are provided in the separate paper ‘Leaving Violence Program – legal assistance for temporary visa holders’.



### **Lack of FDSV Service investment**

While modest sums of money were allocated to individual women escaping intimate partner family violence, no funds were allocated to specialist gendered violence support services. This is despite evidence of increased demand and high-profile murders of women. There is widespread disappointment and frustration, including with jurisdictional blame shifting, especially about the status of funding for the election commitment to deliver 500 additional jobs in the sector. Despite expectations, many of these jobs are ending up outside the specialist sector.

There is also concern in the sector about a lack of national leadership shown with respect to a co-ordinated response across Australia. There is, for example, no national workforce strategy, no nationally applicable service standards, and no funded national peak body for specialist FDSV services. The availability and standards of service for women escaping violence vary considerably based on geography, not just in relation to being regionally, rurally and remotely based (although this factor alone is significant), but also because of the vast differences between states and territories.

However, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner Micaela Cronin's, recent roundtable promises hope that there will be sustained attention on FDSV, including the prospect of future budget announcements. If the Federal Government follows in the footsteps of its Victorian counterparts, there should be an additional Women's Safety Package on its way.

### **Increased investment in the Office of Women**

A particularly welcome investment is in the capacity of the Office for Women to support the implementation of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children and manage the primary prevention review. How this additional resourcing is split between Working for Women coordination and National Plan implementation will be something to watch. A sense of urgency is associated with both the Gender Equality Strategy and the National Plan, such that actions will need to follow investment swiftly, especially as the Federal Government moves towards another election.

### **Women's Safety on Campus**

The response to the dire situation faced by women across our tertiary education sector is welcome and overdue. The [Senate enquiry](#) into current and proposed sexual consent laws in Australia heard evidence specifically relating to the tertiary sector. It made recommendations relating to collecting data on sexual violence on campuses through the [National Student Safety Survey](#), implementing a task force to oversight universities policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual violence, independently review the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's response to sexual violence](#), and most significantly, consider ongoing funding and sufficiently resource Australia-wide Respectful Relationships education within the Australian Curriculum. This is yet to be realised.

## **Conclusion**

The Albanese Government is at the beginning of its journey to end gender-based violence in a generation. Having swept to power on the feminist wave of the #March4Justice, women voters have understandably high expectations for change.

Investments to keep women and children safe necessitate vast, immediate and tailored approaches. However, there must be a concomitant focus on the education of all Australians to change the attitudes and behaviour of men who use violence against women. To reduce injury and death in other areas such as smoking, skin cancer and on our roads, vast, sustained investment has been required over several budget cycles.

There is much to do to enable transparent, whole of government FDSV budget reporting.

## **Recommendations**

NFAW calls for:

- Government commitment to funding DFV response services to meet demand
- Delivery of the LVP be expanded and fully funded to be embedded within DFV support services to enable delivery that is timely and culturally safe
- Full implementation of the recommendations of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Senate Committee – Current and proposed sexual consent laws in Australia
- The stand-alone First Nations National Plan to be prioritised with identified investment to address the disproportionately high rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.