

Budget 2019 – Reducing violence against women and their children

Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children Budget Overview

The Government's financial commitment of \$328.0 million in initiatives to reduce domestic and family violence against women and children is welcomed. All these Budget measures are welcomed - from additional funding for critical national infrastructure such as 1800RESPECT, to new measures such as the development of strategies for the prevention of financial abuse, and improved collaboration between the Federal Family Law system and state family violence and child protection agencies.

However, the 2019-20 budget is unlikely to deliver an identifiable reduction in violence against women and their children across Australia any time in the foreseeable future. There are still major gaps and the individual measures are not situated within a well-designed and fully funded national strategy developed jointly with the states and territories.

The Commonwealth's funding contribution to *the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against women and their children 2010 - 2022* is not sufficient to deliver the significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children across Australia promised in the National Plan.

The Commonwealth Government has not accepted the responsibility to produce a strategic set of policies and the funding needed to implement them, in order to present a credible plan for achieving a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women.

The Commonwealth Government has now clearly signalled the objective of the National Plan will not be achieved in the timeframe of the National Plan.

WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE FOR WOMEN?

- Violence against women is widespread – 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced physical violence and 1 in 5 have experienced sexual violence.
- An estimated 25% of women have experienced emotional abuse by a partner including financial abuse, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.
- By 2021-22, domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women will cost the Australian economy \$15.6 billion in that year, if extra steps are not taken.

- The Commonwealth Government led development of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against women and their children 2010-2022, a comprehensive long-term strategic approach aimed at delivering “a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women by 2022”.

BUDGET MEASURES

The following table sets out the priorities identified by NFAW and the relevant 2019 budget commitments.

NFAW priorities	In 2019 budget?	Comment (if any)
<u>A specific measurable Commonwealth Government commitment to reducing violence against women by which progress can be judged, for example to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women by 2022.</u>	No	The Commonwealth Government measures focus on, and are described in terms of, inputs – not results. The Commonwealth does not identify how each measure, individually and together, will contribute to a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children by 2022
<u>A comprehensive national strategy setting out a pathway, goals and processes aimed to achieve reductions across Australia, which may require a Royal Commission to develop.</u>	No	While this is the largest ever Commonwealth spending commitment to reduce violence against women and their children, the Government has not identified how this particular package to fund the Fourth Action Plan will deliver the objective of the National Plan – to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children.
<u>An independent audit of areas of the Commonwealth to identify all Commonwealth agencies which impact on violence against women (for example, Health, Attorney-General’s, Indigenous Affairs) and develop fully funded coordinated strategies for each portfolio.</u>	No	This Budget package increases the number of Commonwealth agencies and programs involved in delivering the Commonwealth response. While this is welcomed, there is scope for additional portfolios, such as Defence, to play a productive role in developing and implementing policies aimed at reducing violence against women and their children.
<u>National leadership to maximise joint work across state and territory borders, using all the levers available to the Commonwealth through COAG to maximise collaborations, plus increase Commonwealth funding support for national work and to</u>	No	The Commonwealth has not explained how this specific package of measures maximises collaboration with State and Territory Governments. Instead it appears to be a Commonwealth-only exercise driven by existing Commonwealth initiatives and programs.

<p>institutions such as ANROWS, Our Watch, 1800RESPECT, data, research, and joint national work on perpetrators.</p>		
<p><u>A focus on supporting women who have experienced violence and those with greater needs by doubling the levels of support for women escaping violence within 2 years, including women’s refuge and crisis accommodation, long term housing, family violence leave, etc, and a strong focus on CALD and Indigenous women, and women with disability.</u></p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>While the Commonwealth has marginally increased the level of support for women escaping violence, it is still minimal and well below that required. An additional \$75.4 million to continue the Keeping Women Safe in their homes program and to provide emergency accommodation for women and children escaping violence is welcomed. However the proposed amalgamation of the Community Legal service and Aboriginal Legal Service could potentially reduce the level of informed advice and support to aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence.</p>
<p><u>Improve help and support for children who have experienced the trauma of family violence including trauma counselling, extra support at school, priority access to health screenings, and training for teachers to deal with traumatized children.</u></p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>Very limited. Nevertheless, there are small investments including additional support for children who witness and/or experience domestic and family violence in up to 16 Specialised Family Violence Services sites, the delivery of training to General Practice staff, and additional support for the Esther Foundation which includes counselling to assist with domestic violence.</p>
<p><u>Provide detailed independent annual public reports on progress nationally, with a specific focus on progress of state and territory and Commonwealth government actions.</u></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Commonwealth has not provided a comprehensive report on progress achieved by the Commonwealth to date in reducing violence against women.</p>
<p><u>A National funding commitment which recognises the Commonwealth’s responsibility to ensure all women across Australia have a right to be safe – no matter where they live. To deliver this, the Commonwealth must incentivize state and territory government efforts, and support critical cross border work</u></p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>Although the funding in this Budget is the Commonwealth Government’s largest contribution to the National Plan, it is still significantly less than the individual financial contribution of either of the larger states – let alone matching the combined contribution of all States and Territories. The funding level and strategy does not represent a credible plan for a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children.</p>

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