



## “Gender based violence is a national crisis”

I got home from Budget Night with mixed emotions at 11:32pm. I opened my computer to see I had received an email minutes before from Megan, one of our dedicated frontline workers who is an active NWSA member and whose contributions were absolutely critical in the family law reform work we did. I was shocked, shattered and my heart hurt. The message was horrifying.

For years, our frontline has felt the strain on the domestic, family and sexual violence services, and seen the far-ranging impacts of this lack of funding, lack of transparency and lack of accountability.

I spent the day yesterday trying to reconcile this information with the Budget that was announced Tuesday night.

The visceral reality of what women experience every day for simply existing. We can argue over dollar amounts but the uncomfortable truth is in a country as wealthy as Australia - **what are women's lives worth?** It is the principle of truly valuing the experience of 51% of your population.

At the Future Women's Budget Dinner last night Dr Angela Jackson, Lead Economist of Impact Economics and Policy advised the projected cost of Gender-Based Violence to our economy is

upwards of \$55 billion AUD. When you consider that in the context of investment from all governments in Australia- there is sizeable room for improvement in how we manage the current crisis.

Instead of another statement on last night's Budget dissecting each line item and 'what it means for women', I want us all to listen to Megan:

Shared with full permission.

*Hi Katherine and team*

*I hope you are well.*

*Just to let you know, I have been the victim of a violent car jacking at knife point, I have sustained two knife wounds, my daughter was in the car, she is only five.*

*This happened on Mothers Day.*

*I cannot describe how terrifying it was having six offenders jump out of a car wearing balaclavas and black clothing and opening your car door with a large knife in hand. I cannot tell you how terrifying it was when the knife sliced my arm and stabbed my hand. I cannot describe how terrified I was my little one had been hurt by them.*

*I consider myself and my daughter lucky, lucky I wasn't another women on another day being killed in broad daylight by a knife attack, We are not safe.*

*Not safe at home, not safe driving in our cars. I start to wonder where any safe places are for women and young women.*

*I work on the front line, helping victim survivors every day. I co respond with the Sexual Assault Response Team, there seems to be no escaping the reality of Women's lives, as an advocate as we have walked this journey together for many years, as a frontline worker and now again a victim of extremely violent crime that targets women because we're easier to get out of the car seat and easier to intimidate. These crimes are getting more lethal and more violent.*

*The bail laws must be strengthened for all extreme and serious offences not just DFSV, the offenders from Mother's Day were released days before after car jacking on 4 May 2024. They have been released on BAIL and increased violence to extreme - unlawful wounding and robbery at knife point. Previously on the 4th before taken in custody they did NOT use knives. Upon release the violence has increased to extreme. What's going on are their homes so violent they'd prefer to be inside, what's happening in the jail - adult DFSV offenders come out worse and so do all offenders, they learn lethality in jail not rehabilitation.*

*I just wanted to let you know, we are recovering slowly and shocked but okay, it could of been a lot worse.*

*I give you consent to talk about what happened to me on Mothers Day. I was one of four or five victims.*

*Please share with the NWSA working groups, and please spread the word to lock your car doors.*

Thank you Megan for your courage in sharing with us what the reality is for so many Australian women. A life lived in fear is a life half lived. The women of Australia deserve more. The whole of society does.

ENDS

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