



National Women's Safety Alliance

6 January 2023

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP
Prime Minister of Australia

Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher, MP
Minister for Women

Senator the Hon. Amanda Rishworth, MP
Minister for Social Services

Via Email:

Frontline Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Services: a request for specific Budget support to enhance access to frontline services and national data

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

The National Women's Safety Alliance represents 290 organisational and individual members, including many with lived experience of domestic, family, or sexual violence. We feel compelled to write to you on behalf of our members to convey their concern for victim/survivors who seek access to frontline services on their journey towards recovery.

We commend the ambition of your government to see an end to gender-based violence in one generation and your commitment to making Australia a safer place for women and children.

Domestic, family, and sexual violence is a national scourge and has been the focus of countless inquiries, reforms, royal commissions, and vigils. The last five weeks of 2022 saw 16 women murdered, taking the total count of women killed by violence throughout the year to 55. It is evident that we are no closer to creating both the society and the infrastructure that is needed to achieve this ambitious goal: data can be patchy, often not comparable between sources and jurisdictions or not disaggregated into a format that is usable; the allocation of Commonwealth funding by state and territory governments sometimes fails to reflect intended priorities; hospitalisation rates for domestic and family violence are trending upwards; and rates of sexual assaults are increasing at the same time reporting to police declines.

National campaigns and a heightened public awareness of the dynamics of domestic, family, and sexual violence means current levels of demand for referral services, such as 1800 RESPECT, are unprecedented. We welcome the Australian Government's commitment to add 500 frontline staff to help address workforce pressures in the women's safety space and the additional investment into 1800 RESPECT.



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Despite this, for too many who make the decision to reach out to a frontline service, they will find a sector at breaking point. Staff are burnt out and frustrated as they struggle to deliver timely support due to heightened demand not being met by sustainable resourcing.

A 'business as usual' approach to the national emergency unfolding in front of us, will come at the peril of women and children affected by violence. We urge you to commit to targeted funding in the forthcoming 2023-2024 Federal Budget to realise the vision of ending gender violence in one generation and, in so doing, to change the story for women whose calls for advice and support are going unanswered.

Targets include:

- viably resourcing the sector, and align both the intent and the allocation of funding priorities,
- investing in and developing the future workforce, and
- establishing and harmonising existing national data sources, showing the extent and complexity of violence and service delivery and demand.

We trust this correspondence will be given your consideration, as our members continue doing all they can to make Australia a safer country for all. I welcome the opportunity to work with you on achieving this.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Berney
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