

Funding the Frontline

to respond to domestic, family and sexual violence

Every person experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence should be able to access the specialist support they need, when they need it – no matter where they live.

Frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services save lives. They are critical to ensuring victim survivors can receive the tailored and timely support they need to be safe and to recover from violence. But across the country, and particularly in regional and remote areas, these services are struggling under increasing demand and a dire lack of funding.

The Commonwealth Government has made a commitment to end gender-based violence in one generation. While this is commendable, recent announcements in the Federal Budget are simply not enough to get us there.

Until all frontline services are adequately and sustainably funded, we'll never see a future without gender-based violence.

Over 36 women have had their lives taken by violent perpetrators this year. As there is no official count for these deaths, the true number of people killed by partners and family members is likely to be much higher. This is a national crisis that requires a consistent national response. It's time for our Commonwealth leaders to step up and **fund the frontline**.

As the National Alliance of DFV Specialist Services, representing more than 200 specialist service providers, thousands of frontline workers and others working to end domestic, family and sexual violence across the country, **we are calling on the Commonwealth Government to immediately implement the following:**

1. A long-term **National Partnership Agreement** between state and federal governments to ensure ongoing and sustainable funding for all specialist family violence services across the country, with special consideration given to those with high demand in rural, regional, and remote areas.
2. Substantial investment in **frontline specialist sexual assault services** to meet increasing demand and allow diversification of programs, including working with schools and other local organisations to address and respond to sexual violence.
3. A comprehensive **National Workforce Strategy** (including a robust **First Nations Workforce Strategy**) that ensures strong and sustainable specialist domestic and family violence and sexual assault sectors nationwide, including in regional and remote areas. The strategy would recognise the separate requirements of each sector, consistently build sector skills and capabilities, address remuneration, enhance professional development, and support workforce health and wellbeing.
4. Increased input from specialist domestic and family violence experts to the **National Partnership Agreements on housing and homelessness** and the forthcoming **National Housing and Homelessness Plan**, to reflect the reality that women and children escaping violence comprise the majority of people seeking housing and homelessness support across Australia.

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5. **Stronger investment in First Nations specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services** to support community-led responses to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who are disproportionately impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.
6. Additional investment from State and Commonwealth Governments in the specialist legal assistance sector for women affected by gender-based violence, to respond to the increasing demand for assistance. This includes a **dedicated funding stream for women's legal services** in the longer term, to respond to gender-based violence as part of the National Legal Assistance Partnership.

The scale and scope of the gender-based violence crisis in Australia calls for bold, enduring action at the highest level. In terms of government spending, the cost of doing nothing is high – both in economic terms and in lives lost and lives ruined. Investing now, in services that are ready and able, will have an impact far and wide across the country.

We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to commit to these six asks as a matter of urgency – because no one should miss out on the vital support they need to live free from violence.

