

Journalists' Guide to Family Violence Services in the 2016-17 Federal Budget

Australia is in the midst of a family violence epidemic. An unacceptable number of women are being subjected to abuse and violence, yet the decision of governments to inadequately fund relevant services mean that thousands of women are unable to access the support they need to live free from danger.

The Federal Government is responsible for funding a number of vital family violence services areas, and this year's budget is a key test of the Turnbull government's commitment to treating family violence as a national priority.

Overall: Domestic Violence Victoria are calling on the federal government to match the recent injection of funding made by the Victoria Government in response to Royal Commission findings. Based on one per capita comparison that would mean an investment from the Commonwealth of **\$4 billion over two years**.

There are four key Federal portfolio areas to keep an eye out for funding relevant to family violence services:

1. Department of Social Services
2. Attorney-General's Department
3. Indigenous Affairs (within the Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet)
4. Department of Health and Human Services

Break down of specific funding asks"

- Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Services
 - Funding needed to meet national need not known
- Family Violence Prevention Legal services
 - \$28 million additional funding annually
 - A reversal of the \$1.4 million indexation freeze
- Community Legal Centres
 - A reversal of the \$34.83 million cuts over the forward estimates
 - Implementation of the Productivity Commission's recommendation for an immediate injection of \$120 million per year into the legal assistance sector (including CLCs, FVPLS, ATSILS and LACs) per year, including \$14.4 million for CLCs.
- Perpetrator programs, including Men's Behaviour Change work
 - \$38 million additional funding in the next financial year
- Primary prevention
 - \$5 million of funding for the National Foundation for Prevention of Family Violence, plus additional funding for projects.

The pages that follow contain a more details break down of each of these areas.

For more information or comment on funding of family violence services, contact Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda, 0435 597 976.

1. Indigenous Affairs

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services

Family Violence Prevention Legal Services provide a specialist and culturally safe legal service for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples affected by family violence. Their clients are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence, and 10 times more likely to die.

Where to look:

Budget Paper No 2: Expense Measures: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Portfolio Budget Statement: Prime Minister and Cabinet Outcome Measure 2

Budget Paper No 2: Expense Measures: Department of Social Services

What to look for:

1. A reversal of the funding freeze from 2013/14, which effectively amounted to a **\$1.4 million cut** over three years.
2. Experts say an additional **\$28 million** funding is needed annually to ensure demand for this service can be met nationally.

Expert available to provide more information: Antoinette Braybrook, contact via Andrew Gargett, 0457 544 591.

2. Department of Social Services

A. Specialist domestic and family violence services

Specialist family and domestic violence (FDV) services are the critical pillar of any response to family violence. They include services that deliver: crisis response, refuge and emergency accommodation, outreach, counselling, risk assessment, refuge, group therapy, financial support, and support to remain safely at home.

Funding for specialist domestic and family violence services is provided mainly through homelessness programs, which makes tracking of funding allocations for domestic violence services particularly difficult. This is one of the reasons why the sector is calling for a dedicated funding stream for family violence services.

Where to look in the budget:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures: Department of Social Services

Information on funding:

Amount of funding needed to meet national need not known.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria found that the inadequate resourcing of family violence services has serious implications for the safety of people affected by family violence. To address the funding gap for specialist services just in Victoria, the state government recently announced an additional \$103.9 million (over two years) for specialist services.

Expert available to provide comment: Fiona McCormack, Domestic Violence Victoria, via 0409 937 800

B. Primary Prevention

Primary prevention focuses on strategies to prevent violence before it occurs. It involves challenging the deeply ingrained attitudes, social norms and gendered power inequalities that give rise to men's violence against women.

Where to look in the budget:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures: Department of Social Services

Information on funding:

Our Watch, the national foundation for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children, needs \$5 million a year in annual funding to deliver its work. Plus additional funding is needed for a range of primary prevention projects, beyond the \$30 million COAG funded awareness campaign that has commenced.

C. Family and Relationship Services

Family and relationship services can be the first channel that women use to try and access support when someone is using abusive and controlling behaviour. They have an important role in identifying where violence and abuse is occurring, and as a referral point to specialist services.

Inadequate funding for these services mean they aren't able to meet demand and have waiting lists in excess of 3 months.

Where to look in the budget:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures: Department of Social Services

What to look for:

Family and Relationship Services Australia estimate an additional \$47 million would be needed to meet current levels of demand for their services - including but not limited to people experiencing family violence.

3. Attorney-General's

Access to free legal advice and assistance is critical for those trying to escape an abusive partner. A woman will often need legal advice to establish if she can keep her children safe; access shared funds or property; or if she'll be able to escape the web of debts and loans that might have been put in her name by her abuser, as well as a range of other family violence related matters.

A range of federally funded legal assistance services support people affected by family violence, including:

- Community Legal Centres
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (detailed above)
- Legal Aid Commissions

Community Legal Centres

The top two areas of law Community Legal Centres deal with are family law and family violence. CLCs provide a range of advice and assistance to women affected by family violence - including assistance with AVOs, family law, child protection and credit and debt related matters (financial abuse is often a prominent feature of family violence).

Inadequate funding is forcing Community Legal Centres to turn away more than 160,000 people a year, including women affected by family violence.

Where to look:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures: Department of Attorney-General > Legal Assistance Funding and National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services

Budget Paper No. 3: Federal Financial Relations > National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services

Portfolio Budget Statements, Attorney-General's Portfolio, Programme 1.4 Justice Services

What to look for:

1. A **reversal of the \$34.83 million cut** over the forward estimates between 2017-2020. That's:
 - a. \$12.1 million in 2017-18
 - b. \$11.6 million in 2018-19
 - c. \$11.3 million in 2019-2020
2. Increased funding for Community Legal Centres this year. Experts say at least **\$14.4 million additional funding** is needed to address unmet need across CLCs this year – including, but not limited to family violence related cases.

In 2014 the Productivity Commission recommended that an immediate injection of \$200 million per year for legal assistance services (including CLCs, FVPLS, ATSILS and LACS) was required to meet existing demand. It suggested that the Commonwealth should contribute 60 per cent of that funding (\$120 million per year).

Expert(s) available to provide more information:

Rosslyn Monro, Chairperson, National Association of Community Legal Centres, 0407 633 084.

Amanda Alford, Director Policy and Advocacy, National Association of Community Legal Centres, 0421 028 645.

ATSILS

Where to look:

Portfolio Budget Statements, Attorney-General's Portfolio, Programme 1.6 Indigenous Legal and Native Title Assistance

What to look for

1. ATSILS are facing a \$4.428 million funding cut from 2017-18 and further funding cuts from 2018-19.
2. ATSILS are calling for an increase in funding to \$90 million per year.

Legal Aid

Where to look:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures: Department of Attorney-General > Legal Assistance Funding and National partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services

Budget Paper No. 3: Federal Financial Relations > National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services

Portfolio Budget Statements, Attorney-General's Portfolio, Programme 1.4 Justice Services

4. Department of Health and Human Services

Perpetrator intervention programs

Working with men who use violent and controlling behaviour is critical to preventing and minimising the harm of family violence. Men's behaviour change programs work to improve the safety and well being of women and children.

Where to look in the budget:

Budget Paper No. 2: Expense Measures > Department of Health and Human Services

What to look for:

No To Violence have been calling for **\$38 million** additional funding this year, and \$37 million in additional funding for 2017 onwards to improve and expand perpetrator accountability programs including men's behaviour change programs.

Expert available to provide more information: Jacqui Watt, CEO of No To Violence/Men's Referral Service, 0425 406 659.

Other related areas to keep an eye on

Women's Health Services

Women's Health Services play a critical role in both preventing violence from happening and supporting women who are experiencing violence – including by referral to appropriate crisis support and accommodation assistance.

Primary health services, such as women's health centres and GPs, are one of the key accessible pathways to safety for many women – with 1 in 5 women affected by family violence first disclose this to their GP.

Housing

Women and children who have been pushed out of their own homes by domestic and family violence often have to navigate lengthy and fragmented processes to access safe and affordable housing (both rental and purchase) – moving between accommodations that lack security of tenure and safety.

The lack of affordable and available housing in Australia limits exit pathways from crisis accommodation for women and children leaving situations of family violence.