

Turnbull's 2018 budget bitterly disappointing and potentially dangerous for women affected by domestic violence

This year's federal budget is not only disappointing, but potentially dangerous for women affected by family violence, according to domestic violence and women's groups.

Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence, the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) and the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW) have jointly expressed despair that the Government has, once again, allocated inadequate resources to the services women rely on to escape abuse.

"It's great the Turnbull Government is [talking about](#) providing women with real choice and access to opportunity. But women won't have real choice and opportunity if they don't have the chance to escape abuse and to live free from violence." Says Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

"We're bitterly disappointed that there appears to be just \$18.2 million of funding announced for domestic violence focused services tonight. That's a fraction of what's needed to ensure that every woman who needs crisis support, a safe and affordable place to live, or community legal support to get ongoing protection and navigate lengthy court processes, can access specialist services that are safe and understand their needs. Tonight's announcement also does nothing to address the number of men perpetrating family violence." Says Moo Baulch, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW.

"Last year the Victorian Government announced a \$1.9 billion package to address domestic violence in the state. We need the same level of commitment and leadership from the Turnbull Government in its areas of responsibility." she added.

"The Treasurer declared in his budget speech that one of the five things the Turnbull Government must do with this budget is 'keep Australians safe', but made no mention of tackling domestic violence; and appears to have announced very little that will help the huge numbers of women and children who remain unsafe and under threat in their homes." Ms Carr said.

"There is no new money for frontline domestic and family violence services and no mention of specialist support or affordable safe housing for families escaping domestic and family violence. In the year of #MeToo and the context of the Turnbull Government's repeated commitments to prioritising the elimination of violence against women the silence from the Treasurer tonight is deafening." Added Ms Baulch.

The most recent [AIHW data](#) shows requests for assistance for domestic and family violence rose in 2016-17, with 14,000 more requests for assistance by specialist homelessness services than the previous year.

"The Turnbull Government's decision to inadequately resource family violence services is a choice that will leave thousands of families without the support they need to stay out of hospital, to make it in to work or their place of study, to be healthy and happy parents, and know they'll be returning to somewhere safe and affordable at the end of their day. " added Ms Carr.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience family violence at vastly disproportionate rates. The women who rely on our service are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised and 10 times more likely to die of a violent assault.” Said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum.

“Yet our services nationally remain chronically underfunded. Our women deserve to have access to culturally safe services like Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.” She added.

“Community Legal Centres are a vital part of the legal framework in responding to and addressing family violence. Every day women visit Community Legal Centres to get information about their rights, to escape abuse, to keep their children safe, or to keep a roof over their heads.” said Amanda Alford, Acting CEO of the National Association of Community Legal Centres.

“Yet every year our centres are forced to turn away hundreds of thousands of people. That means women aren’t getting the legal help they so desperately need. Tonight’s budget appears to have failed to invest in these vital frontline services.” she added.

“When it comes to men who use family violence, the ‘lock them up and throw away the key’ approach is futile, costs the taxpayer millions, and is a short-term fix for recidivism.” said Jacqui Watt, CEO of No to Violence, the peak body for groups working with men to end family violence.

“We need community-based responses; for example more funding into men’s intake referral services, Men’s Behaviour Change Programs, and case management. We would have liked to have seen a greater commitment from the Federal Government, and disappointingly, we haven’t.” she added.

“In this year’s budget the Turnbull Government has prioritised cutting corporate tax. Women’s safety and freedom from violence should have been an equivalent priority. If it had been, we’d have seen the Federal Government matching the Victorian Government’s recent commitment to frontline services so that victim-survivors can get the support they need to be safe.” Ms Baulch added.

A 2011 national survey showed that 48% of respondents who experienced domestic and family violence said the violence had affected their ability to get to work. 10% needed to take time off work. Further, women who experience domestic and family violence are more likely to have a disrupted work history, and to have to change jobs at short notice.¹

Fair Agenda, Domestic Violence NSW, National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum, No to Violence, NACLC and NFAW are jointly calling on the Turnbull Government to ensure women affected by domestic and family violence also have genuine choice and opportunity; by adequately funding the services needed to address a leading contributor to their injury, illness and death.

They are calling for the Federal Government to match the Victorian Government’s recent \$1.9 billion funding commitment to domestic violence prevention and response.

¹ Human Rights Commission website: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace>

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