



Dear Women's Safety Ministers,

As specialists with years of experience working with and for women and children subjected to violence, we know that long-term, major reforms are needed over the coming months and years to achieve lasting improvements to safety and justice.

We also know there are key changes your governments can make immediately that will dramatically improve the safety of many women and children within weeks.

As well as committing to comprehensive reform to prevent all forms of violence against women, we urge you to action these five desperately needed changes at your meeting on Friday:

1. **Fully fund the specialist services** that improve women's safety, and hold men who use violence to account, including:
 - o The safety planning, risk assessment and wrap-around individual support provided by specialist women's services,
 - o The safe at home programs and emergency accommodation services provided by specialist homelessness providers working specifically with victim-survivors of violence,
 - o The legal assistance and representation provided by specialist women's legal services, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, community legal centres, Aboriginal legal services, and Legal Aid,
 - o The perpetrator intervention, men's behaviour change programs and fathering programs provided by accredited men's behaviour change experts,
 - o The specialist and culturally-safe services that are best able to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from migrant and refugee backgrounds,
 - o The disability advocacy and domestic violence services needed to support women with disabilities to overcome the barriers to achieving safety after violence from a partner, carer or in an institutional setting,
 - o The safe phones program, which has been found to be effective in delivering victims/survivors greater technology safety,
 - o LGBTIQ+ services and LGBTIQ+-specific resources, programs and targeted community education campaigns,
 - o Supporting community-based services to lead the conversations needed to change the attitudes and behaviours that enable violence, including empowering bystanders.

2. Remove the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility and emphasis on shared parenting in the *Family Law Act 1975*, to **ensure a child's safety and wellbeing are the key considerations**, so that courts are determining the best parenting arrangement for their needs and circumstances.

3. Initiate a standard screening, risk assessment and referral process nationally, to **ensure public health, social and community services are trained to identify key safety risks early** for people experiencing violence in their relationships, and able to refer them to the services that can help them achieve safety and recover.
4. Agree to institute **improved AVO standards** to make clear what is expected of police, magistrates and courts to hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure women and children subjected to domestic and family violence are able to rely on these orders to achieve safety and justice.
5. **Ensure victims/survivors seeking help can access free translating and interpreting services**, so that regardless of their disability, cultural or language background, or geographical location, any woman reaching out for help to build a safer future is able to access the assistance she needs.

As with all initiatives for improved community safety and wellbeing, these urgent steps must be taken in a way that responds to the factors that shape people's experiences of violence and encounters with institutions. These can include: the ongoing impacts of colonisation, race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, religion, dis/ability and age, as well as the community attitudes, geographical isolation and the poor connectivity experienced by women in remote, rural and regional areas.

Further to these five immediate interventions, we note that the national alliance tasked with bringing together organisations to develop solutions, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA), has presented [comprehensive advice](#) on the major long-term reforms needed including the [Blueprint for Reform](#) for women on temporary visas experiencing violence, and that Women's Legal Services Australia has mapped out the steps required for [Safety First in Family Law](#). These solutions will require meaningful and sustained investment. AWAVA, its members and allies stand ready to work with governments to design and implement these reforms together.

This national crisis cannot be solved overnight. But actioning these five changes will bring immediate and substantial improvement to the safety of many women and children currently at risk, and will save lives. We urge you to do your part.

Signed,

1. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
2. Embolden - Alliance for Women's Freedom, Equity and Respect (South Australian peak body for women's domestic and family violence services)
3. Women's Legal Services Queensland
4. Women's Legal Services Tasmania
5. Ruby Gaea Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence
6. Sexual Assault Support Service Tasmania
7. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service North Queensland Inc.
8. Emma House Domestic Violence service
9. Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA
10. North Queensland Women's Legal Service
11. Equality Rights Alliance
12. WESNET - The Women's Services Network
13. Annie North Inc
14. Domestic Violence NSW
15. Women's Legal Service NSW
16. economic Security4Women

17. Limestone Coast Family Violence Action Group
18. National Rural Women's Coalition
19. CASA Forum – Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault
20. Ending Violence Against Women Queensland
21. Seras Women's Shelter Inc.
22. Mackay Women's Services
23. Association of Women Educators
24. National Council of Single Mothers & their Children
25. YWCA Canberra
26. Women's Safety NSW
27. Mitcham Family Violence Education and Support Service
28. Centre for Non-Violence
29. Eastern Region Domestic Violence Services Network Inc – Koolkuna
30. Communicare Women's Support Services
31. Carnarvon Family Support Services
32. WRISC Family Violence Support Inc
33. Women's Centre Far North Queensland
34. Migrant Women's Support Program of Women's Safety Services SA
35. Lucy Saw Centre Association Inc
36. Penrith Women's Health Centre
37. Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health
38. Macleod Accommodation Support Service Inc.
39. inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
40. North Shore Women's Benevolent Association Limited
41. Mid Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service
42. safe steps Family Violence Response Centre
43. Darwin Aboriginal & Islander Women's Shelter
44. Harmony Alliance - Migrant and Refugee Women for Change
45. Accountability Matters Project
46. DVConnect
47. Domestic Violence Action Centre Toowoomba
48. Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre
49. Domestic Violence Crisis Service Canberra
50. Immigrant Women's Support Service
51. Sonshine Sanctuary Association
52. Beryl Women Inc.
53. Edon Place and Centre for Women & Co
54. Lou's Place
55. Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service
56. Women's Information, Support and Housing in the North
57. Settlement Services International
58. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
59. Northern Territory Council of Social Service
60. Domestic Violence Victoria
61. Project Respect
62. Melaleuca Refugee Centre
63. Dawn House Inc
64. Western Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service
65. Bramwell House (Salvation Army)
66. Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
67. WASH House Inc.
68. Immigrant Women's Speakout Association Inc.
69. Immigration Advice and Rights Centre