



Advocates slam budget for failing women trying to escape family violence

Advocacy groups Fair Agenda and Women's Safety NSW have slammed the Morrison Government's budget for providing zero dollars of new funding for the services victim-survivors of domestic violence rely on for their safety.

Analysis from Fair Agenda shows that many of the specialist domestic and family violence services victim-survivors rely on to be safe aren't funded to help everyone that needs them - including safe at home programs, crisis accommodation, legal assistance and specialist women's domestic and family violence services.

"During this time - when being safe at home is more important than ever, and when the pandemic and recession are compounding the domestic violence crisis - it's shocking that the Morrison Government has decided not to properly resource the services victim-survivors rely on to be safe." said Renee Carr, Executive Director of community campaigning group Fair Agenda.

"They've made a decision to leave a horrifying number of women without the support they need to escape abuse and build safer futures." she added.

"These are services that have the ability to save and change lives - when they're resourced. Survivor advocates have even written to members of the Government about the better future that's possible when services are available. It's heartbreaking that this area of such importance and desperate need hasn't been a top priority in this budget." she concluded.

"The government invited experts to brief them on what's required to improve women's freedom from domestic and family violence - and they appear to have completely disregarded our advice." Added Hayley Foster, CEO of Women's Safety NSW.

"We have been clear that women on temporary visas who are experiencing violence are at incredible risk right now; and that current government systems give their abusers leverage to keep them trapped. But none of the changes those women need were contained in this budget." she added.

“We know safe at home programs are vital for so many women’s safety; and need a huge injection of funding to meet demand. Instead, this budget will mean thousands of women are forced to make the impossible choice between fleeing their unsafe home and hoping they can access homelessness services, or staying trapped with their abuser.” she added.

“This budget will mean many victim-survivors are left without the support they need to manage their safety in moments of great danger - as incredibly inadequate resourcing of the specialist domestic and family violence services that have never been under greater pressure leads to waiting lists of months for women who need safety support right now.”

“What’s more, the complete lack of action on women’s financial independence - through affordable accommodation, child care, jobs in female dominated industries and income support will mean many victim-survivors will be left without the financial means that is often critical to being able to escape an abuser, and manage safety post-separation.” Ms Foster added.

Fair Agenda and Women’s Safety NSW also note the budget commitment to extend support for urgent matters in the Family Court and Federal Circuit Court of Australia have not been met with the increased service funding needed to support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence through the process.

“We strongly support the urgent list in the family courts, and the continuation of the improved cross-examination approach in family court proceedings. However support and advocacy from specialist family and domestic violence services is critical to women’s and children’s safety through these processes. ” says Ms Foster.

“In fact, the government has ignored the recommendations from its own commissioned independent evaluations of programs in deciding not to properly fund specialist legal and social supports for victim-survivors going through these systems. Failing to properly resource the services that women rely on for their safety will have dire consequences.” Ms Foster concluded.

Available for comment:

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