

Labor



A New Approach
**TO ENDING
VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**

A message from **LUKE FOLEY, NSW LABOR LEADER**

Domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women.

These crimes are unacceptable.

I am determined to take action to end violence against women.

A government that I lead will undertake a comprehensive suite of initiatives to tackle violence against women, including:

- Trialing new specialist courts for domestic violence and sexual assault;
- Strengthening the penalties for breaches of apprehended violence orders; and
- Providing a \$14.5 million boost for women's refuges, counseling services and prevention programs.

This is just the beginning.

I will also establish a new Premier's Council for Women and restore the women's portfolio to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

These measures will allow us to develop new whole-of-government approaches to ending violence against women.

Ending violence against women is one of the most important issues our society faces, and I will bring my personal leadership to making this a priority across government.

Yours sincerely



Luke Foley
NSW Labor Leader



The facts

ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NSW

- On average one woman in Australia dies every week from domestic violence.
- There were almost 30,000 reported domestic violence related assaults in NSW last year.
- Women are twice as likely as men to be victims of domestic violence related assaults.
- There were almost 5,000 reported sexual assaults in NSW last year.
- 82 percent of victims of sexual assault in NSW are women.
- Domestic violence is the largest volume of crime the NSW Police deal with.
- Domestic and family violence is estimated to cost the NSW economy \$4.5 billion a year.
- Domestic violence is recognised as the single greatest preventable cause of death, ill health and disability for women aged under 45 in Australia.



Labor's **TEN-POINT** **PLAN** to END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A Foley Labor Government will bring a new approach to ending violence against women. We will:

1	Provide a \$10 million boost to support women's refuges.
2	Establish new specialist courts for domestic violence and sexual assault.
3	Establish a new Premier's Council for Women and move the women's portfolio back to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
4	Strengthen penalties for breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders.
5	Invest \$2 million to expand counselling services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
6	Invest \$1.5 million to expand the "Tackling Violence" program for Indigenous communities.
7	Invest \$1 million to expand men's behaviour change programs.
8	Expand domestic violence leave in the public sector and local government.
9	Amend the <i>Anti-Discrimination Act</i> to protect victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
10	Strengthen the role of Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers.

1 Labor will provide a \$10 MILLION BOOST TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S REFUGES

Throughout 2014, the NSW Liberals and Nationals have been rolling out their *Going Home Staying Home* changes to funding for specialist homelessness services.

***Going Home Staying Home* has caused enormous dislocation and disruption among non-government organisations providing specialist homelessness services.**

The impact has been particularly severe for women's refuges, many of which were forced to close after being given limited opportunities to receive funding under a poorly designed and ill-conceived tender process.

Before the Liberals and Nationals *Going Home Staying Home* reforms there were around 100 women's services across NSW. Now there are only 20.

NSW Labor recognises the enormous dislocation that *Going Home Staying Home* has already caused, and we will honour all agreements that have been entered into in order to prevent further uncertainty and disruption.

Given the significant and widespread concerns raised by *Going Home Staying Home*, a Foley Labor Government will review the provision of homelessness services in every community in NSW to identify any gaps that have been caused by *Going Home Staying Home*.

Labor's review will involve detailed consultations with non-government service providers, local police and health services, and others who have on-the-ground experience dealing with homelessness and domestic violence.

On the basis of feedback that has already been received from communities across the state, Labor will provide an additional \$10 million over the next three years to fund gaps in the provision of homeless services.

This funding will assist women's refuges which have lost funding as a result of *Going Home Staying Home*, ensuring that women and children fleeing domestic violence can find the support they need.



2 *Labor will establish new* **SPECIALIST COURTS FOR** DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

A NSW Labor Government will establish specialist Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Courts to streamline the criminal justice system and provide better support to the victims of these horrendous crimes.

Specialist domestic violence and sexual assault courts operate in many jurisdictions around the world and provide a number of advantages including reducing the trauma experienced by victims of these crimes.

Under Labor's commitment, we will establish:

- A specialist Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Court in the first term of a Labor Government;
- An expert committee to advise on the best model for the courts; and
- A metropolitan trial site in Sydney and regional trial sites in the Hunter and the Illawarra.

These specialist courts will offer greater consistency and efficiency in the handling of domestic violence and sexual assault cases.

They will provide an improved experience for victims and an improved justice system that will lead to better outcomes, including higher rates of reporting, prosecution, convictions and sentencing.

Specialist courts will also develop specialist knowledge, best practice and improve procedural measures through feedback from victims, legal practitioners and other court users.



COURT HOUSE

3 Labor will establish a new **PREMIER'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN** **AND MOVE THE WOMEN'S** **PORTFOLIO BACK TO THE** **DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND** **CABINET**

A NEW PREMIER'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

Labor believes that addressing issues that confront women requires strong leadership and a whole-of-government approach.

A Foley Labor Government will bring a new approach to women's issues by establishing a Premier's Council for Women.

The Premier's Council for Women will comprise women from diverse backgrounds – including representatives from businesses and unions who will be appointed to provide their expertise and insights into how the NSW Government can best support women.

The Premier's Council for Women's focus in its first year will be developing a co-ordinated, long-term and evidence-based framework to prevent and respond to violence against women.

This framework will be developed through a series of roundtables involving the members of the Premier's Council for Women, relevant Ministers, the heads of relevant public sector agencies, non-government service providers, victims' rights advocates and other experts.

NSW Labor also supports Federal Labor Leader Bill Shorten's call for a national summit on domestic and family violence.

A Foley Labor Government will be fully committed to participating in such a summit, and will ensure that relevant representatives from the NSW Government – including Ministers and heads of relevant agencies – are available to attend.

A Foley Labor Government will also work with the Commonwealth to trial and roll-out any initiatives developed by the summit which will help to address domestic and family violence in NSW.



RESTORING THE WOMEN'S PORTFOLIO TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

One of the first decisions taken by the NSW Liberals and Nationals after the 2011 State Election was to move the women's portfolio from the Department of Premier and Cabinet to the Department of Family and Community Services.

Women's issues are not restricted to 'families' or 'community services'. Women's issues require a whole-of-government approach.

Combating domestic violence requires coordination across a range of portfolios, including Police, Health, Housing and the Attorney-General's portfolio.

Labor will reverse the Liberals and Nationals' decision to place the women's portfolio in the Department of Family and Community Services.

Labor will restore the Office for Women as an agency within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, returning women's issues to their rightful place at the heart of government.

4 *Labor will strengthen* **PENALTIES FOR BREACHES** **OF APPREHENDED VIOLENCE** **ORDERS**

Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) are an important element of efforts to combat domestic violence. However AVOs should not be a mere piece of paper – they should carry the full weight of the law.

The penalties provided by NSW laws for breaches of AVOs are currently the weakest of any state. Only 12 percent of those who breach orders receive jail time. The most common penalty is a bond without supervision.

A Foley Labor Government will overhaul the penalties for those who breach domestic violence orders.

Stronger penalties for breaches of AVOs will provide additional assurance to victims of domestic violence, deter perpetrators from breaching AVOs and ensure that tough penalties are delivered to those who break the law.

A Foley Labor Government will also:

- Support the establishment of a National Register for AVOs to be implemented through the Council of Australian Governments process; and
- Work to develop a publicly searchable register of domestic violence offenders to provide women who are concerned about their partner with the option to check their partner's history.

5 *Labor will invest* **\$2 MILLION TO EXPAND COUNSELLING SERVICES** FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

The harm done by domestic violence and sexual assault is never limited to purely physical damage. The psychological trauma caused by these crimes can be significant, with the potential to cause long-lasting mental health issues for survivors.

Labor is determined to expand access to counselling services in order to support victims of these crimes.

A Foley Labor Government will establish a \$2 million fund to provide grants to non-government organisations to help them to expand counselling services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The requirements for funding from this program will be developed in-line with recommendations from the evidence-based framework which will be developed by the new Premier's Council for Women.



6 *Labor will invest* **\$1.5 MILLION TO EXPAND THE “TACKLING VIOLENCE” PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

Labor is determined to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to support their efforts to address domestic and family violence.

Aboriginal women are six times more likely to be a victim of a domestic violence related assault than non-Aboriginal women.

Achieving long term social change is a vital component to reducing rates of domestic violence in indigenous communities. The most effective way to reduce domestic violence behaviours in communities is empowering people to use their own voices.

In 2009 the NSW Labor Government initiated the “Tackling Violence” program in which community sporting groups are given \$3000 in sponsorship in return for players taking an anti-domestic violence pledge, participating in two anti-domestic violence workshops and appearing in a professionally produced anti-domestic violence advertising campaign to be aired on local television channels.

Originally funded through both state and federal sporting and community outreach programs, the State Government has continued the program since federal funding ended at the conclusion of 2013.

In 2013, 27 clubs from 24 regional communities participated in the program. By the end of the season 1056 men had signed the code of conduct.

NSW Labor will commit an additional \$1.5 million over three years to extend our successful “Tackling Violence” program to an additional 10 at risk communities to help them end domestic violence



7 Labor will invest **\$1 MILLION TO EXPAND** MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

Labor recognises the importance of changing men's behaviour as a means to ending violence against women.

Men's behaviour change programs provide an opportunity for men to reflect on their actions and end violent, abusive and controlling behaviour.

Labor will provide an additional \$1 million to fund an expansion of men's behaviour change programs. We will also work with organisations providing these programs to undertake research and develop evidence to inform their future work.

The requirements for funding from this program will be developed in-line with recommendations from the evidence-based framework which will be developed by the new Premier's Council for Women.

8 Labor will expand **ACCESS TO PAID** DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

Paid domestic violence leave can be a vital support for victims of domestic violence, providing them time to receive support and seek justice without putting their job at risk.

The NSW Government is Australia's largest employer, with more than 320,000 employees.

NSW Labor believes that the NSW Government has a crucial role to play as a model employer.

In 2010 the Keneally Labor Government granted NSW public sector employees a right to five days worth of paid domestic violence leave.

A Foley Labor Government will double the existing entitlement to paid domestic violence leave for NSW public sector employees from five days to ten days per year.

Most domestic violence sufferers will already have used up their personal and sick leave. This additional leave will allow for extra time off for medical and counselling appointments, police appointments, legal advice, court attendance, finding new accommodation and child care.

A Foley Labor Government will also:

- Allow five additional days of leave per year for a person supporting someone experiencing domestic violence.
- Work with local councils to provide domestic violence leave for all local government workers covered by state workplace laws.
- Support any efforts at a Commonwealth level to make domestic violence part of national employment standards for private sector workers.

9 Labor will amend the **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACT TO PROTECT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT**

A Labor Government will extend protections under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* to people who experience domestic violence or sexual assault.

The *Anti-Discrimination Act* is one of the great achievements of the Wran Labor Government.

The *Anti-Discrimination Act* already contains broad prohibition on discrimination in work, education, the provision of goods and services, accommodation and registered clubs on the grounds of a person's race, sex, disability, transgender status, domestic or marital status, carer responsibilities, homosexuality and age.

There is currently no prohibition in the *Anti-Discrimination Act* for discrimination against a person on the grounds of their having been a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Labor will amend the *Anti-Discrimination Act* to provide protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

These protections will be particularly important to ensure that women who are fleeing domestic violence and sexual assault are not disadvantaged or discriminated against at work if they are absent while seeking counselling or pursuing justice through the court process.



10 *Labor will strengthen* **THE ROLE OF POLICE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LIAISON OFFICERS**

Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) play a crucial role responding to domestic violence.

DVLOs assist victims, often during their darkest moments, and have an instrumental role to play bringing perpetrators of violence against women to justice.

DVLOs liaise with community services, develop partnerships for victim support, provide support for victims throughout the court process, liaise with prosecutors and court staff and monitor repeat victims and repeat offenders.

A Foley Labor Government will work with Police to strengthen this important role by consulting with DVLOs to identify additional resources which they may require and ensuring that the role of DVLO is recognised as of the most important frontline positions in the Police Force.

