

WOMEN'S REFUGES AND HOUSING PROGRAM (WRAHP)

THE PROPOSAL

Commonwealth /State Women's Refuges and Housing Program (WRAHP) 2015-2020

A long term Commonwealth /State funded Program for crisis services is needed to keep women and their children safe and housed, and to help them deal with the devastating effects of domestic violence. The urgency of providing a place of safety for victims and the particular danger and stress facing women and children in this situation sets support and housing for victims apart from other types of homelessness. A specific, dedicated secure long term source of funding is urgently needed.

WRAHP is a purpose designed and adequately funded national program to provide 24 hour accessible front line, integrated support services, including crisis and transitional supported accommodation. This would help women and accompanying children who are in crisis, including at risk of further injury or death as a result of domestic violence, to achieve maximum safety, self-reliance and independence and safe housing pathways and solutions. It would also include support and interventions that enable women to stay in or return to their homes.

Fatal and damaging domestic and family violence demands an immediate service response pending attitudinal and behavioural change from the other outcomes set out in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

In recent years women's refuges have been subsumed into the homelessness agenda and have not been recognised or adequately supported for the complex homicide prevention work they are required to provide. Escaping domestic violence is vastly different in character to homelessness and requires a specialised program. It is a crisis situation, that with this specialist assistance may eventually see the woman and her children returning to their home and community.

The cost estimate for WRAHP is \$1.982 billion over 5 years, funded 50/50 by Commonwealth /State funds. This amount is a combination of 30% of the Specialist Homelessness Services allocation under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and 30% of National Partnership on Homelessness funding together with \$68m added to first full year of funding to increase services. Funding then increases over the 5 years.

WRAHP will include funding for refuges currently received under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) which is coming to an end in 2017 and other funding programs. The proposed legislated base is The Commonwealth /State Women's Refuges and Housing Program Act. A draft Bill is currently being prepared by women's organisations led by Women's Electoral Lobby. They are consulting nationally with key academics, experts and peak organisations. A draft Bill is attached. Attachment A.

1. As stated in the Draft Bill *'The overall aim of WRAHP is to provide integrated support services, including crisis and transitional supported accommodation and support to remain safely at home, in order to help women and accompanying children who are in crisis as a result of experiencing domestic violence to achieve the maximum possible degree of safety, self-reliance and independence.'*

2. Features include:
 - Providing or arranging for the provision of integrated and specialised domestic violence services including supported accommodation and legal interventions for protection.
 - Helping women and accompanying children who are fleeing domestic and family violence to obtain long-term, secure and affordable housing or accommodation and support services, including the choice to remain or return to their own home.
 - Providing 24/7 access to women's refuges and other specialist outreach services so that police and other emergency workers have adequate access to safe and supportive services, as well providing women and children in crisis with direct access for self-referral.
 - Improving and expanding service access and responses for women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, sexuality and gender diverse women, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse(CALD) women and accompanying children.
 - Increasing housing pathways for women and children out-of-crisis accommodation through the allocation of 30% of transitional and longer-term housing products and stock to women and children who have become homeless due to domestic violence.
 - Increasing the number of women's refuges and the *Safe at Home Programs* to provide women and children with the option of having the perpetrator removed and remaining in their home, or returning to their home when it is safe to do so.
3. The Program will acknowledge the well evidenced efficacy of services run by women for women and build this into funding and implementation. At the outset WRAHP will access documented unmet service information to develop an interim economic model using data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), apprehended violence orders (AVO), domestic homicide data, hospitals, child protection and other service data from each state. The development of the economic model will measure the costs of providing a holistic response to domestic and family violence and takes into account the costs of the suite of specialist support services including outreach services and accommodation.
4. The \$1,982m over five years will not fund a range of other services. The draft Bill (page 10) states that service providers have a responsibility to further the integration into the community of women and accompanying children who are escaping domestic and family violence by increasing access to employment; education and training; health services (including mental health services); disability and rehabilitation services; children's support services; income support; legal services; financial advice services; other appropriate opportunities and resources. The availability and access to the above services vary widely in each state and need to be the subject of separate work.
5. WRAHP will establish baseline data to measure and evaluate program effectiveness, including responding to and reducing domestic and family violence and its economic consequences.
6. Prevention measures are important and will continue separate to WRAHP program.
7. WRAHP will be reviewed after 5 years to assess ongoing requirements due to actual and projected reduction in violence from prevention and early intervention initiatives.
8. WRAHP will include funding for refuges currently received under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) which is coming to an end in 2017 and other funding programs.

WRAHP supports early intervention and prevention strategies set out in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Girls*. However, the current need for adequate crisis services and accommodation for women and children cannot be compromised. Services have been unable to meet the demand for over a decade. The proposed Program is focussed on the crisis services needed to keep women and their children safe and housed and to help them through the crisis. WRAHP separates Women's Refuges and Housing Program funding from the general homelessness program.

Proposed Funding

2015-16 \$m*	2016-17 \$m*	2017-18 \$m**	2018-19 \$m**	2019-20 \$m**	Total \$m
287	315.7	378.84	454.608	545.5296	1,982
\$219m+\$ 68m	10%increase	20% increase	20% increase	20% increase	rounded

*Some funds will be available from commitments for National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

** 20% increase in years 3, 4, 5 reflects capacity of program to deliver increased services effectively.

Beyond year 5 the capital component will decline.

Notes

The Commonwealth and state and territory (C/S) governments currently (as at August 2015) contribute \$109.5m p.a. each (C/S total \$219m p.a.) to domestic violence crisis services and related housing. The base line figure for WRAHP is \$287m comprising \$219m with an additional \$68m (National Homelessness figure indicates that 2,800 women fleeing domestic violence were turned away from refuges in the period 2014 to 2015). This \$68m is double the original estimate of \$34m as the amount in this proposal includes children as well as capital costs and state contributions.

http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/Media_Releases/homelessness-fair-agenda.pdf

Depending on when Program commences there may be some slippage through to 2020-21

Estimate of contributions from States and Territories to WRAHP.

State / Territory	\$ Year 1	\$ 5 year program	% of Aust total population
1 New South Wales	45.9m	317m	31.99%
2 Victoria	35.7m	246.5m	24.87%
3 Queensland	28.8m	199.3m	20.10%
4 Western Australia	15.8m	108.9 m	10.98%
5 South Australia	10.3m	71.1m	7.16%
6 Tasmania	3.1m	21.6m	2.18%
7 Australian Capital Territory	2.4m	16.3m	1.64%
8 Northern Territory	1.5m	10.3m	1.04%
Total	143.5m	991m	100
C/S total	\$287m	1,982m	

RATIONALE FOR WRAHP

- The cost of violence against women and their children to the Australian economy in 2009 was \$13.6 billion. It is calculated to rise to \$15.6 billion by 2012-22 without the right preventive action.
- There is a range of funded programs at a state and federal level that are designed to meet the needs of women and children who are experiencing or needing to escape domestic and family violence. Some of these are due to end soon. Since the abolition (2012) of the SAAP Act, some states have moved away from the funding and provision of specialist domestic and family violence services such as women's refuges to a generalist homeless approach in service modelling. This has resulted in fewer specialist services for domestic violence victims at a time when Australia's domestic violence homicide rate and police response rates to domestic violence incidences are at an all-time high. This WRAHP proposal focuses on reinstating a nationally consistent and adequately funded program that has bipartisan support and is enshrined in legislation.
- Prevention measures are essential to reduce domestic violence in the long-term, but with the current rate of domestic violence in Australia, adequate crisis services need to be included in the strategy. More crisis services are needed for the 85,000 adults and children seeking help from specialist homelessness service agencies for domestic and family violence (2013/2014 AIHW)
- Governments are committed to action on domestic violence The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has recognised the importance of the problem, and has developed a 12-year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan). Over 12 years the National Plan's stated aim is to achieve: "A significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children".

To meet this goal, Commonwealth, state and territory governments have agreed to work together to achieve six 'National Outcomes':

1. Communities are safe and free from violence
2. Relationships are respectful
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened
4. **Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence**
5. Justice responses are effective
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

To meet outcome 4 - **Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence** - WRAHP is proposed as a purpose designed and adequately funded national crisis support program. It is noted that an exemption may be needed for WRAHP under the Sex Discrimination Act provisions. https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2015C00275/Html/Text#_Toc422815225

BACKGROUND

1. For decades women's refuges were funded by Commonwealth /State agreements including the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). Prior to SAAP, women's refuges were funded by a range of programs including Community Health. The 1994 Supported Assistance Accommodation Act is proposed as a model for the WRAHP Act. <https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2004A04835>
2. Current Funding arrangements

Current funding (estimates)

	Commonwealth \$	Commonwealth Domestic Violence (30% of overall figure) \$	State/Territory Contributions To domestic violence \$	Total \$
Overall figure of Current NAHA	1.3 b			
Specialist Homelessness Services allocation under the NAHA	250 m	75 m	75 m	
NPAH	115 m	34.5 m	34.5 m	
		109.5 m	109.5 m	219m

3. The Commonwealth provides funding to the states for homelessness – in particular, specialist homelessness services (SHS) – in two ways:

- As part of the general funding for **National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA)** which replaced the C/S Housing Agreement (CSHA) in 2008. The NAHA is a broad banded agreement that incorporates the funding previously provided for homelessness services through the SAAP funding. States are not required to match this, but they generally provide more funding to state homelessness programs than the amount previously provided by the Commonwealth as SAAP funding. \$1.3 billion is provided to states and territories each year. This includes \$250m per year for Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). NAHA is the primary source of Commonwealth funding provided to state and territory governments to deliver housing assistance and specialist homelessness service, along with the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).
- **The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH)**. This was a specific time-limited boost for homelessness funding. After strong lobbying campaigns it has been extended twice by the Abbott government, most recently as announced in March 2015 by Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Scott Morrison (\$230 million in 2015-17). States are required to match this. Funding priority is given to frontline services focusing on women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and homeless youth under 18. Under the NPAH, jurisdictions retain the flexibility to decide which service providers in these priority areas should be funded and in which location. https://www.coag.gov.au/housing_and_homelessness

4. **Reform of the Federation**

Longer-term funding arrangements and the respective roles of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in housing and homelessness will be considered in the context of the Commonwealth Government's *White Paper on Reform of the Federation*. This issues paper was issued in December.

http://federation.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/issues-paper/Housing_and_Homelessness_Issues_Paper.pdf

The White Paper is expected late 2015.

5. The **Council of Australian Governments (COAG)** has set up an Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children. The 23 July 2015 COAG Communiqué

<https://www.coag.gov.au/node/524> made commitments to community education, and is pursuing programs for schools, innovative ways to use technology to keep women safe and prevent perpetrators from reoffending as well as the Model Law Framework for Domestic Violence Orders and National Perpetrator Standards. These are important next steps in addressing violence against women and their children.

On 24 Sept 2015, the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Minister for Women Michaelia Cash announced several initiatives (\$101m) as part of the *Women's Safety Package to Stop the Violence*. When making the announcements the Prime Minister said, "We will make it a clear national objective of ours to ensure that Australia is more respecting of women. Violence against women begins with disrespecting women. Disrespect of women doesn't always end up in violence against women, but all violence against women begins with disrespect of women... It is my dream that Australia will, in the future, be known for respecting women."

Details of the Women’s Safety Package to Stop the Violence include:

- \$12m for a trial of technology like GPS bracelets to track perpetrators
- \$5m for the distribution of 20,000 “safe” mobile phones so that survivors cannot be traced by perpetrators
- \$17m extra for the Safer in the Home program, which installs CCTV cameras, changes locks and undertakes safety assessments of survivors’ homes
- \$5m boost for 1800 RESPECT
- \$2m for MensLine to help stop reoffending
- \$15m for Queensland police to respond to reports of domestic violence in Indigenous and remote communities, and for programs to stop Indigenous men in that state from reoffending
- \$3.6m for the sharing of information between states when survivors and offenders move across the borders of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory
- \$14m for the training of frontline staff in how to spot signs of domestic violence in survivors and perpetrators
- \$15m for the creation of legal centre domestic violence hubs
- \$5m for the better coordination of women’s services, including housing, safety and budget-planning services
- \$1.4m for more community engagement police officers in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory
- \$1.1m for prevention and response measures and targeted victim support in remote Indigenous communities
- \$5m for online resources for young people on respectful relationships through the Safer Schools website

<http://www.pm.gov.au/media/2015-09-24/womens-safety-package-stop-violence>

6. Federal funding of \$100 million was previously allocated as part of the Second Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. Over four years 2014-2018, this \$100m funds ANROWS, Our Watch, 1800 Respect, National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service data collection, National Domestic Violence Order Information Sharing System (NDVOISS) and other initiatives.
7. There is a further \$30m Commonwealth /state funding for a national attitudinal change campaign.
8. National Labor Platform July 2015 includes the following:
 - Delivering more certainty for homelessness services supporting women and children escaping family violence situations;
 - Enable women and their children experiencing family violence to remain safely in their current home and community.
9. **Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence** reported on 20 August 2015 (members Katy Gallagher (Chair) (ALP) Cory Bernardi (Deputy Chair) (LIB), Joseph Ludwig (ALP), Claire Moore (ALP), Dean Smith (LIB), Larissa Waters (Greens)). There were three recommendations relating to crisis services:

Recommendation 20

10.67 The committee recognises the importance of the **provision and availability of supportive housing models to assist victims of domestic and family violence to find safety for themselves and their children**. The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government should play a lead role in identifying programs that could be implemented across the country, and in ensuring that specialist and ‘wrap around’ support services have access to dedicated, secure funding.

Recommendation 22

10.72 The committee recognises the long term effort required to address domestic and family violence and recommends **that the current Commonwealth short-term funding arrangements should be extended to a multi-year approach to reduce the level of uncertainty for services** and to allow for adequate future planning in the sector.

Recommendation 23

10.73 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government take a lead role in the **provision of affordable housing solutions in Australia** to meet long-term needs for those made homeless by domestic and family violence and in order to address the backlog of victims who cannot access affordable housing which stakeholders have identified during the inquiry.

10. Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) have recently released a paper *Women With Disabilities Australia: ‘Preventing Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities: Integrating A Human Rights Perspective’*.
11. In August 2015, **Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk** announced her government would implement all of the 140 recommendations that were made in the Quentin Bryce report *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*.
<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/end-domestic-and-family-violence>
<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/documents/getting-support-health-social-issue/dfv-report-vol-one.pdf>
12. In August 2015, **Tasmanian Premier Will Hodgman** announced a comprehensive package in the presence of Australian of the Year Rosie Batty and Chair of The Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children (Our Watch), Natasha Stott Despoja AM.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-13/specialist-family-violence-prosecutors-proposed-for-tasmania/6693178>

The media coverage stated that commitment of \$25.6 million four-year expenditure total was comparatively more than other states had committed to tackling family violence. This additional funding would be equivalent to an extra \$377m in New South Wales, or an extra \$290m in Victoria on a per capita basis.

The Tasmanian Domestic Violence Action Plan includes:

- Safe Families Tasmania - \$8m to establish a multi-agency unit to support victims and hold perpetrators to account.
- Support for families and children:
\$2m for additional crisis accommodation

\$2.4m to lease rental properties as supported housing
\$4m for counselling support for children and adult victims
\$3.14m for social workers and psychologists.

- Stronger legal responses and awareness programs.

13. In August 2015, the **ACT Government** announced that its five key priorities for addressing domestic violence over the next two years are:

- Driving a whole of community and government action plan to prevent violence and create and anti-violence culture.
- Understanding diverse experiences of violence.
- Supporting innovative services and joined up service systems.
- Improving perpetrator interventions so that men are held accountable and supported to change their behaviour, and
- Continuing to build the evidence base.

http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2015/an-ongoing-commitment-to-addressing-domestic-violence

In October 2015, **ACT Policing** announced two new dedicated family violence and community safety teams in a significant restructure designed to strengthen its response to domestic abuse. The domestic violence team will be led by Station Sergeant Jo Cameron and based at Belconnen, while Station Sergeant Jason Kennedy will oversee two regional community safety teams in the territory's north and south.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/act-police-announce-bolstered-measures-to-tackle-domestic-and-family-violence-20151002-gk054v.html>

14. **Victoria** has a Royal Commission into Family Violence.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-13/domestic-violence-royal-commission-first-day/6614308>.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews said the Royal Commission would "give us the answers we need and nothing will be off limits...We need a system that protects the vulnerable, punishes the guilty and saves lives".

15. In October 2015, **NSW Premier Mike Baird** and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Pru Goward announced a \$60 million package to target perpetrators and support women, men and children who have experienced domestic and family violence.

The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Package includes:

- Police Domestic Violence High-Risk Offender Teams to target perpetrators and reduce the rate of re-offending;
- Domestic and Family Violence Suspect Target Management Plans to put offenders on notice;
- \$19.5 million for Mandated Behaviour Change Programs to make perpetrators address their behaviour;

- \$20 million for Crisis Accommodation Support to: provide expert and responsive 24/7 on-call services; increase beds through refuges renting nearby properties; and provide more crisis/emergency accommodation and temporary accommodation;
- \$2.3 million in Police-NGO partnerships for nongovernment organisations to provide specialist domestic and family violence support in the four pilot Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme sites; and
- \$1.3 million to expand the number of qualified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in high-risk and rural NSW communities.

https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/violence_prevention/new-dfv-package

To view this Proposal and its accompanying Statement of Support and Draft WRAHP Bill please visit www.wel.org.au/wrahp or www.facebook.com/WomensElectoralLobbyAustralia

Please email your comments to the WEL office via wel@welnsw.org.au by **Monday 19 October 2015**.