



Helen L'Orange AM
Convenor
Violence Against Women Action Group
Women's Electoral Lobby
8-10 Victoria St
NEWTOWN NSW 2042

Dear Ms L'Orange

Thank you for your letter to Mr Shorten regarding funding for women's refuges and other frontline services for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Labor acknowledges the work of the Women's Electoral Lobby through its Women and Children Safety Program, supported by more than 30 women and community organisations, to advocate for better resourced women's refuges and other frontline emergency services which are so vital to supporting women and children escaping family violence.

Family violence is a matter of national urgency and addressing and preventing it will be a priority of a Shorten Labor Government.

Labor believes national leadership and a coordinated response is necessary to bring about the social and judicial reforms required to drive cultural change.

This must be matched with critical investments in community, housing and legal services to better support those experiencing the scourge of family violence, as well as investments in preventative measures.

Under the Turnbull Liberal Government front-line support services including Community Legal Services, housing and other specialist and community services that support families and children who have experienced family violence have faced millions of dollars in cuts, and continuing uncertainty in their funding arrangements.

Labor's first fully funded policy announcement was to bring forward a plan for a deeper national conversation on family violence to articulate the key policy priorities as well as investing in critical frontline services to better support people experiencing and escaping violence in their homes.

This includes our commitment to convene a National Crisis Summit on Family Violence within the first 100 days of a Shorten Labor Government.

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

A National Crisis Summit will enable the Federal Government and the States and Territories to agree to urgently implement coordinated judicial and social services reform within their areas of responsibility to better deal with family violence and address the fragmentation in responses. The National Crisis Summit is also the best way for stakeholders to openly and transparently lay down the key policy challenges for addressing family violence.

Homelessness services will be a key priority for discussion at the Summit.

Following the National Crisis Summit, a Shorten Labor Government will seek a new deal on coordinated judicial and social services reform to better respond to, and prevent, family violence.

In addition, Labor has outlined a number of costed policies to invest in frontline services.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Labor will invest \$42.9 million in frontline legal services to ensure women threatened by violence do not go through the legal system alone. \$4.5 million will also be invested to build capacity in Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) who directly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children experiencing family violence. Services are culturally inclusive and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children in the specified service region.

Labor will also repair the damage done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) by the Abbott-Turnbull Government who have cut \$13 million from these services, and will deliver the funds ATSILS need to keep doing their vital work. Specifically, a Shorten Labor Government will deliver ATSILS \$18.2 million over three years, and \$2.25 million to the national representative body for the ATSILS to strengthen national representation.

SAFE HOUSING FOR WOMEN

Domestic and family violence is a major cause of homelessness in Australia. Over one third of people who accessed specialist homelessness services over the three years to 2013–14 were seeking assistance due to domestic and family violence.

Labor believes that Australia needs to provide more support and assistance to women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

In our package to address domestic violence announced in March 2015, Labor committed an initial investment of \$15 million in Safe at Home grants to help people affected by family violence stay safe in their own home.

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

PO BOX 6222, KINGSTON ACT 2604 ABN 38 318 251 221
T 03 8625 5000, Twitter: @AustralianLabor, facebook.com/LaborConnect, www.alp.org.au

Authorised by G. Wright, Australian Labor Party, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton, ACT, 2600

This could include infrastructure such as key changes and lock upgrades to doors and windows, sensor and security lighting, security screen doors, external CCTV cameras, training and monitoring and alarm systems. In addition, we will map and understand best practice of existing state safe and home strategies, including risk assessments, for implementation across Australia.

Labor will also invest \$88 million in a new Safe Housing program to increase and improve transitional housing options for women and children escaping domestic and family violence by filling the gap between crisis housing and longer term arrangements.

The Safe Housing program will increase the number of refuges specifically available for women and children fleeing domestic violence and will provide funding for support programs that help women to stay safe in their own homes, as well as support specialist women's services.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Labor will invest \$8.4 million into research on mapping perpetrator interactions across family violence, law enforcement, justice, child protection and related systems, including:

- Identifying opportunities to interrupt violent behaviours through information sharing between agencies.
- Supporting research to increase our knowledge of how perpetrators track through these systems.
- Helping to better understand the role of risk assessment systems to understand perpetrator behaviours, including a longitudinal study.

FUNDING CERTAINTY FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE PEAK ORGANISATIONS

A Shorten Labor Government will provide funding certainty to the organisations delivering the outcomes of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, with an investment of \$65 million over six years.

Labor's commitment will ensure 1800 RESPECT, Our WATCH and ANROWS can continue their critical work in tackling the scourge of family violence to 2022.

These organisations provide critical counselling crisis services, prevention and awareness raising and develop the vital evidence base to better understand the issues.

Labor established the National Plan in 2010 to set out a long term framework to coordinate the responses to reduce violence against women and children, and lay important foundations to respond to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE LEAVE

A Shorten Labor Government will provide for five days paid domestic and family violence leave in the National Employment Standards.

The Standards provide statutory minimum conditions for all employees – women and men – covered by the national workplace relations system. Labor's plan is part of the solution to reduce the costs to individuals suffering family violence, as well as businesses and the Australian economy.

Those who have access to the leave entitlement will retain their job and income, which gives women choice, reduces isolation, helps them to care for their children and provides them with a safe home environment.

Labor's plan to address family violence is critical to achieving greater gender equality in Australia, which is at the heart of the Labor mission. There is no clearer symbol of continuing gender inequality in our society than the epidemic of violence against women.

Further details of our policies can be read at www.alp.org.au and www.100positivepolicies.org.au.

Labor looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with women's and community organisations to address the scourge of family violence.

Thank you again for writing on this most important issue.

Yours sincerely

ALP Information Services Unit

BILL SHORTEN AND LABOR. WE'LL PUT PEOPLE FIRST

PO BOX 6222, KINGSTON ACT 2604 ABN 38 318 251 221
T 03 8625 5000, Twitter: @AustralianLabor, facebook.com/LaborConnect, www.alp.org.au

Authorised by G. Wright, Australian Labor Party, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton, ACT, 2600