



Women's Electoral Lobby | 8-10 Victoria Street, Newtown, NSW 2042

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26 October 2015

Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash  
Minister for Women  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister Cash

We write to ask you to support a proposal for long term secure Commonwealth/State (C/S) funding for women's refuges and related services.

Many community and women's organisations have welcomed the Commonwealth Government's announcement of a \$100 million package of measures to provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence. We are encouraged by your ongoing strong advocacy on behalf of women and their children. Thank you Minister.

Women escaping violence need choices about where they can go so they will feel - and be - safe. The 'joined up' services that women's refuges offer give women the help and resources they need to make choices about the right solution for them. Women's refuges save lives and are at the heart of the system of support for women and children fleeing domestic violence in Australia.

The Women's Refuges and Housing Program (WRAHP) proposal is for long term dedicated C/S funding for women's refuges, related services and transitional accommodation. We estimate WRAHP will cost \$1.982 billion over five years, and should be funded 50/50 by C/S. The Specialist Homelessness Services allocation under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership on Homelessness funding provide the start-up funding. These two programs are drawing to an end.

In recent years funding for women's refuges has been subsumed into general homelessness funding, which has failed to acknowledge or adequately support refuges for the complex homicide prevention work they provide. Escaping domestic violence is vastly different in character from general homelessness and requires specialised programs. It is a crisis situation, which with the specialist help provided by refuges may eventually see women and their children returning to their home and community.

Women's Electoral Lobby, established in 1972, is an independent, non-party political lobby group dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and their ability to fulfill their potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

*The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (“National Plan”), with its six planned outcomes, is an excellent blueprint for action. The focus of WRAHP is on Outcome Four: Services to meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence. Fatal and damaging domestic and family violence demands an immediate service response pending attitudinal and behavioural change from the other outcomes in the National Plan.

We have sent the WRAHP proposal to the COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children where it is under active consideration. We have also sent it to all COAG members seeking their endorsement of the WRAHP proposal at the 27 November COAG meeting.

Minister we ask you to use your influence to urge COAG to take this much needed step towards ensuring women and their children needing to escape domestic violence will find a safe haven through a refuge and its programs.

Yours sincerely



Helen L'Orange AM  
**Convenor, WEL Violence Against Women Action Group**

**Attachments:**

1. The Women's Refuges and Housing Program (WRAHP) Proposal
2. The Women's Refuges and Housing Program (WRAHP) Draft Bill