



## Pre-Budget Submission from Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

### Endorsed by:



The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) is one of the six National Women's Alliances funded by the Government to bring together women's organisations and individuals across Australia to share information, identify issues and their solutions. AWAVA's role is to ensure that women's voices are heard by Government.

AWAVA's focus is to *'ensure that all women and children are able to live free from all forms of violence and abuse'*. The Alliance recognises that violence against women is both a consequence and cause of gender and other social inequalities, in all sectors of society and must be addressed by promoting women's empowerment.

AWAVA is able to provide supporting information, or provide contacts for further discussion, on any of the issues or proposals within this submission, as well as on other issues relating to violence against women. Please contact Amy Blain on 0418574018 or email: [pm@awava.org.au](mailto:pm@awava.org.au)

**The submission proposals are endorsed, partially or fully, by AWAVA's Member Organisations (see Annex A)**

## The need for increased investment and focus on primary prevention

The Government's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (National Plan)* recognises the need for a strong focus on primary prevention and emphasises “*working to increase gender equality to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.*”<sup>1</sup> To end or reduce violence against women, the focus must remain firmly on its root cause, recognising that this violence is both a cause and consequence of gender and other social inequalities.

The success of the 12-year *National Plan* is contingent on sufficient investment and prioritisation in its implementation and setting the foundations early on for driving long-term, sustained social change. The Government committed to giving ‘*momentum*’ to primary prevention in the first National Plan 3-year Action Plan; momentum is driven only by action, and AWAVA strongly urges significant funding to be invested in prevention of violence against women in the upcoming and future budgets.

Without action, by 2021-22:

- the cost of violence against women to the Australian economy will rise to an estimated **\$15.6 billion**<sup>2</sup>
- an estimated **three-quarters of a million Australian women** will experience and report violence<sup>3</sup>
- Violence against women in particularly vulnerable groups of women – immigrant and refugee women will cost the economy **over \$4 billion** and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women an estimated **\$2.2 million**<sup>4</sup>

International Violence Against Women Experts preparing for the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission for the Status of Women theme: *the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls*, highlighted in September 2012 that:

*“States have not only a responsibility to significantly strengthen their planning and budgeting efforts for prevention of violence against women and girls, but that doing so will contribute to positive social and economic outcomes.”*<sup>5</sup>

The Beijing Platform for Action (paragraph 124(p)) internationally calls on member states for the allocation of “*adequate resources within the government budget and mobilisation of community resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of plans of action at all appropriate levels.*” As a global leader on addressing violence against women, it is fundamental that Australia include an ongoing budgetary commitment on this issue in every budget statement. This should include new projects and programs that build on existing knowledge across the lifetime of the National Plan, in addition to the \$86 million announced with the *National Plan* back in 2010. Levels of funding should be commensurate with the scale of the issue.

The International Experts also noted that with the current global financial crisis that:

*“States should particularly ensure that programmes to prevent violence against women and girls are not seen as a ‘soft target’ for funding cuts.”*

*“States should ensure that austerity policies, and other fiscal policy measures, are ‘equality-proofed,’ including impact assessments on women and girls (and with regards violence against them), and measures to counteract the effects of the financial crisis on women and girls.”*<sup>6</sup>

Further recommending that States should:

*“Ensure earmarked budgets are in place in each relevant Ministry – including human and technical resources – to fund such strategies over the short, mid and long-terms”.<sup>7</sup>*

AWAVA provides project proposals in this submission for the 2013-14 budget in recognition that ending violence against women *“is a long-term project that involves transforming gender relations”*.<sup>8</sup> Sustained investment is required across communities and schools to improve understanding and implementation of prevention activity, for example educating children and their teachers about gender equality and consistent, accurate messaging and reporting on violence against women in the media.

AWAVA is well-positioned to assist the Government by driving change through its networks and partnerships with member organisations. We need to work with Government to:

- Promote a whole-of-government, integrated approach to addressing violence against women
- Help communities to understand, prepare, and to implement, primary prevention initiatives
- Drive attitudinal change through key influencers, including the media, and encourage a whole-of-community response
- Strengthen primary prevention projects in schools to ensure they adopt a whole-school-approach, and through professional development training are sustainable longer-term
- Raise awareness and drive prevention activity responsibly; making sure that the services are able to cater for increased demand, with additional refuge, shelter and other crisis beds and additional specialist domestic/family violence and sexual assault staff being funded alongside prevention initiatives
- Ensure equity of access to services for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from immigrant, refugee and non-English speaking backgrounds

AWAVA is aware that the safety of women and children must not be compromised and recognises that increasing awareness and prevention activities for violence against women will increase demand for services. We do not want to see a situation where women and children are turned away from services unable to cope with the numbers seeking help. The Government needs to invest in refuge, shelter and crisis housing alongside investment in primary prevention to manage this effectively. There is already a current turn-away rate for shelter beds and specialist support, and waiting lists for sexual assault counselling. One in two people who request immediate accommodation are turned away each night due to high demand and under-resourcing, and a majority of these people are women and their children.<sup>9</sup>

Primary prevention activities in the short term will increase demand for support and shelter and consequently, without additional resources, will increase turn-away further, resulting in increased risk for women and their children. Extra shelter beds must be supported by additional specialist domestic and family violence workers. Increased funding for health services and counselling for women and children, including specialist counsellors such as sexual assault counsellors and advocates will also be required to ensure victims/survivors of violence are able to access the assistance they need when they need it. Similarly, better funding of legal services for women will be required to ensure timely access to assistance. It is not acceptable to champion primary prevention without making sure that women and children currently affected by violence are safe, or that women who seek services as a result of the primary prevention activity are turned away from immediate support.

## **AWAVA Proposals for the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget:**

### **1: National Media Framework in Support of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children***

Following the endorsement of the National Plan Implementation Panel on 8-9 November in support of a co-ordinated and evidence-based, national approach and media framework to support achievement of the outcomes of *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22*, this proposal seeks a formal commitment to funding.

Complementary and multi-faceted media strategies that are consistent and evidence-based are necessary to address entrenched attitudinal and cultural values that support violence against women. The lack of community understanding of the social dynamics and realities of violence against women, and the inaccurate ways violence against women is represented by the media and the broader community, present a potential challenge to achieving the outcomes of the *National Plan*.

*“...it is fundamentally important to recognise that it is ineffective for these strategies to either stand alone or to be discreetly implemented through individual services. Enacting isolated and scattered initiatives wastes resources and effort”<sup>10</sup>*

#### **Project:**

1. The establishment and adequate funding of a 3-year project, contract-managed by AWAVA and led by AWAVA's member organisation, DV Vic, (leading experts in engaging the media, in consultation with *Victorian Cross-sector Advisory Committee on VAW and Media*, key sector stakeholders), as national co-ordinators for the development of state-wide strategic frameworks for violence against women service providers to guide services to work with media in preventing violence against women, over the medium and long-term

Each **state-wide framework** is likely to involve:

- Engaging relevant stakeholders and convening committees for each state and territory
  - Setting directions for how to engage with the media
  - Providing a structure to enable key players to co-ordinate their efforts with others in the field
  - Outlining processes for building solid working relationships between the preventing violence against women sector/system and the media industry, and across the preventing violence against women sector/system itself
2. Work (AWAVA and DV Vic) with the Office for Women in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to develop a national framework, based on the consultations and frameworks developed within each state/territory, to support a co-ordinated and strategic approach for working with the media to prevent violence against women across the nation.

**Funding requested:** \$800,000-\$1,000,000 over 3 years, recommended funding from the Safety Taskforce Branch in the Department of Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs

### **2: No Fear – Violence Prevention Program for Primary Schools**

This program model differs from the Respectful Relationships programs which are primarily delivered by outside organisations directly to students in high schools. The No Fear program is aligned with the National Safe Schools Framework and responds to a significant body of research from the field of education, which recommends integrated curriculum and pedagogical approaches,

for embeddedness and long-term sustainability. No Fear focuses on developing the understandings and skills of teachers, supporting professional development in how to address issues of gender justice and all forms of violence against women and girls, through the mainstream school curriculum including students from the early years. Such an approach also addresses the problems of bullying and violence as experienced by boys, and focuses on the intersections of socio-economic class, race, and sexuality.

A 2 ½ year pilot program project would be contract-managed by AWAVA and run by member organisation, the Association of Women Educators, with outcomes/findings/learning from the project being applied nationally. It would involve teachers and students in 10 primary schools, in a comprehensive professional learning program to:

- increase understanding about gender and violence against girls and women, and
- develop and implement a whole-school-approach to the development of respectful relationships

All school staff will participate in a conference, and a core group of up to 5 key teachers from each of the 10 schools will be intensively involved in 10 days of professional learning and support for action research projects involving their students. Over the 2 years of the program, this group will share their learnings and resources, leading and supporting wider and more comprehensive implementation across management and teacher practice, involving the whole school community, including early years' teachers, administrators, curriculum leaders and guidance officers and critical friends from academia, the community sector, and the government policy arena. Formal evaluation and reporting will be undertaken.

**Funding requested:** \$500,000-\$550,000, which we would recommend is funded from within the education and teacher training portfolio.

### **3: Community Leaders: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Against Violence Against Women**

In response to Outcome 3.3 (1) of the *National Plan* we propose to work jointly with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliances (NATSIWA) to improve the cultural competence of mainstream and specialist services. This is critical to ensure that Violence Against Women Services respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. Under the Family Safety Program this project would engage community leaders in addressing violence against women in their communities, focussing on educating service providers, including the police. AWAVA would be the content experts on violence against women issues and NATSIWA would work with AWAVA to provide the culturally relevant content. Key outputs would be the development of a series of education and training resources, including manuals and a set of service standards, and promotion of these resources in Indigenous communities. This project would also foster Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's participation in policy and program development design to reduce violence against women.

**Funded requested:** in the region of \$200,000-\$250,000; we would recommend this is funded from within the Department of Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs

### **4: Additional crisis refuge, shelter or crisis beds with additional support workers and additional sexual assault counsellors and advocates to respond to increased demand from prevention and awareness-raising activities**

Increased prevention activities results in raised community awareness of the issue and services available, resulting in increased demand for services. This demand for services occurs when women and their children are fleeing violence and are most at risk. The women's domestic and family violence sector has received no systematic or consistent growth funds in two decades or for the specific service model, despite increasing demand leading to turn-away. Sexual Assault services have waiting lists due to lack of staff and resources. Priority needs to be given to the housing needs of women experiencing all forms of violence: domestic, family and sexual violence.

Access to services must be equitable - for example the safety accommodation needs of particular groups such as refugee and immigrant women that have been sexually abused outside of a family/domestic context - also needs investment.

Any prevention and awareness activities need to involve the violence against women service providers to prepare them for an increase in clients. Providers do not want to be in a position where they are turning women and children away. It is unjust that women and children seeking shelter from violence or support are turned away or put on a waiting list.

AWAVA will work closely with WESNET and NASASV (The National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence – the peak body for organisations who work with survivors of sexual violence) to advise Government on strategic allocation and monitoring of this injection of funding.

**Funding:** Refuges, shelters and crisis properties and staff are currently funded through the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NaHa). Domestic and family violence, including sexual assault is one of the major structural drivers of homelessness in Australia. An injection of additional funds targeted towards specialist women's domestic and family violence services is urgently required as there is current turn-away. Prevention activities will increase demand, thus further increasing turn-away. Additional specialist sexual assault counsellors and advocates are needed to address lengthening waiting lists arising from increased demand on services.

## References

1. Commonwealth of Australia (2011), *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, Canberra, page 15
2. The *National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, (March 2009), *The Cost of Violence Against Women and their Children*, Canberra, page 4
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, page 9
5. Viewed at: <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf> on 21/1/13
6. Ibid
7. Ibid, page 31
8. Viewed at: [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/PreventionViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/PreventionViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx)
9. Viewed at:  
[www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/UserFiles/File/Fact%20sheets/Fact%20Sheets%202011-12/Homelessness%20&%20Women%202011-12\(8\).pdf](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/UserFiles/File/Fact%20sheets/Fact%20Sheets%202011-12/Homelessness%20&%20Women%202011-12(8).pdf)  
Creating a Framework for Ending Homelessness, Homelessness and Women Factsheet  
[www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au)
10. Parity Magazine (2011), Vanessa Born, DV Vic Media Projects Manager

**Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) Member Organisations**

**Organisation Represented**

National Chair Women's Services Network	WESNET
Association of Women Educators	AWE
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence	NASASV
Women's Services Network	WESNET
Australasian Council of Women and Policing	ACWAP
Australian Women's Health Network	AWHN
Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services of South Australia	CWDVS SA
Domestic Violence Victoria	DVVic
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Northern Territory	NASASV NT
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence ACT	NASASV ACT
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Victoria	NASASV Victoria
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance	NATSIWA
Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women Australia	NIRWA
NSW Women's Refuge Movement	NSWWRM
National Union of Students Women's Officer	NUS Women's Officer
Queensland Domestic Violence Refuge Sector	QLDDVSN
Women's Council For Domestic & Family Violence Services WA	WCDFVS WA
Women's Essential Service Providers Tasmania	WESP Tas
Women's Legal Services Australia	WLSA
Women With Disabilities Australia	WWDA