

Stronger, Smarter, Fairer...?

The success of the 12-year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children* relies on sufficient investment, prioritisation of its implementation and setting the foundations early on for driving long-term, sustained social change.

Julie Oberin, Chair of AWAVA, comments on the 2013-14 budget: *"An ongoing budgetary commitment, clearly linked to the National Plan implementation, across the entire plan and its lifetime, is fundamental each year. This needs to be commensurate with the scale of the issue. The announcements in the 2013-14 budget for the Royal Commission reflect this and give a much-needed focus on child sexual assault, for which the Government should be congratulated, it needs to be acknowledged that similar funding levels are needed across all forms of violence against women and their children."*

AWAVA Advisory Group member and Chair of the National Association of Services Against Sexual Assault (NASASV), Liz Little, agrees: *"AWAVA and NASASV wholeheartedly welcome the investment in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. \$45 million for expert services to ensure that survivors of child sexual abuse are supported to participate in the Royal Commission is a vital recognition of the importance of specialist services in addressing sexual assault."*

Samantha Bowden, AWAVA Advisory Group member and NASASV NT representative applauds the funding for sexual assault counselling in remote areas of the Northern Territory as part of the mobile outreach services plus, *"This will provide much-needed support for those remote parts of the Northern Territory where we know that access to specialist support services is difficult and presents a real barrier for young people and children who have experienced sexual assault."*

AWAVA welcomes the establishment of a foundation focused on preventing violence against women and their children and looks forward to help developing, providing advice, supporting, and working with, the foundation. Julie Oberin stressed: *"AWAVA are keen to work with, and to participate in the development of the foundation so that it can draw upon and build on the existing primary prevention and early intervention knowledge base and work undertaken by the preventing violence against women's sector. The National Plan requires continued, coordinated, partnerships and it is key that the new foundation develops on work already being progressed within the sector."*

AWAVA supports the funding of research, advocacy, and service provision on female genital mutilation/cutting and funding to Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid to help respond to family law, family violence, and domestic and sexual violence issues. The funding for legal redress and remedy for victims of workplace bullying is welcomed; however, it is important that this investment responds to the gendered nature of workplace bullying which also includes sexual harassment and that women are disproportionately impacted by workplace bullying. In 2012, the Australian Human Rights Commission found

that one-third of women (33%) have been sexually harassed since the age of 15, compared to fewer than one in ten (9%) men¹.

We welcome the acknowledgement in the Women's Budget Highlights 2013-14 that women and girls with disabilities experience an increased risk of physical, emotional, sexual and psychological violence and hope that this is reflected in the DisabilityCare Australia reform. Equally, AWAVA strongly support the recognition that domestic and family violence continues to be the major cause of homelessness and that specialist homelessness services are a significant part of the system response to domestic and family violence, longer-term solutions beyond the one year transitional National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness are vitally needed.

AWAVA welcome the creation of the Andrew Fisher Applied Policy Institute for Ageing which will provide the Government with evidence-based advice on ageing related issues. We hope that the Government will continue to invest in much-needed research on the neglected area of violence against older women. Government statistics indicate that, across Australia, 344 reports of 'alleged or suspected unlawful sexual contact' were made in residential aged care alone during 2011-2012². AWAVA Advisory Group member and Women's Services Network (WESNET) representative, Margaret Augerinos, adds *"It is now forecast that a significant population of ageing women on low incomes, who have experienced violence during their life span and still bear the health and wellbeing impacts, will experience poverty, and housing and health stress over the next decade. It is critical that resources are put in place for these women sooner rather than later."*

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Background

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)

AWAVA is the Commonwealth-funded National Women's Alliance focused on addressing all forms of violence against women and girls.

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¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Working without fear: Results of the Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey* (2012) <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/chapter-1-working-without-fear-results-sexual-harassment-national-telephone-survey-2012-0>

² <http://normasproject.weebly.com/uploads/1/8/6/8/18685098/mediareleasemay2013.pdf>