



The LIBERAL PARTY
of AUSTRALIA

BRIAN LOUGHNANE
Federal Director

25 June 2013

Ms Julie Oberin
Chair
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance
GPO Box 1579
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Ms Oberin,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to outline the views of the Coalition on the important issues facing your members. On behalf of the Coalition Members of Parliament and candidates, I am pleased to respond to your request.

Please find attached an article for publication by you.

Between now and 14 September 2013, the Coalition will be progressively providing further details of Our Plan to build a strong prosperous economy and a safe and secure Australia.

Once announced, the details of our policies will be available at www.liberal.org.au and www.nationals.org.au.

Thank you for helping us communicate the Coalition's commitments to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Loughnane".

Brian Loughnane
Federal Campaign Director

Response to

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

1. What are your party's major priorities for addressing violence against women and their children?

The Coalition has a zero tolerance approach to violence against women.

Whatever a woman's circumstances and aspirations, we believe it is the role of government to keep her safe from violence and discrimination and provide support and services that help her and her family thrive.

We believe that keeping women and their families safe is the most fundamental step towards ensuring their security and prosperity. Violence undermines our social fabric and prevents women from achieving social and economic equality and advancement. It is linked with homelessness, poverty, unemployment and disability.

Domestic violence also has a huge impact on the economy. In 2009, it was estimated that violence against women and their children costs approximately \$13.6 billion each year. If additional effort is not undertaken reduce domestic violence, that figure is estimated to rise to \$15.6 billion by 2021.

A Coalition Government will focus on delivering greater personal safety to all Australian women.

We will build on the Coalition's record of implementing policies which reduce violence against women. This record included the \$75.7 million commitment by the former Coalition Government to the *Women's Safety Agenda* which took a lead role in eliminating domestic violence and sexual assault in the Australian community by focussing on prevention, health, justice and services.

As part of this agenda, the former Coalition Government launched the groundbreaking *Violence Against Women, Australia Says No!* national domestic violence and sexual assault campaign, aimed at raising community awareness and stigmatising this unacceptable behaviour.

Central to the Coalition's current approach is the implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. This is an important step towards combating violence through a co-ordinated effort at all levels of Government. We remain disappointed at the slow implementation of this plan and the apparent lack of commitment from the Gillard Labor Government.

In addition, a Coalition Government will implement practical, direct action initiatives to protect the safety of women. These programmes include spending \$50 million over four years to help keep streets and public areas safe. The Coalition's *Plan for Safer Streets* will boost the efforts of local communities to address crime and anti-social behaviour by helping them implement cost effective measures.

If elected to government, the Coalition will:

1. Provide *Safer Streets, Safer Communities Grants* – these grants will ensure much needed local infrastructure such as better lighting, CCTV and mobile CCTV can be rolled out in crime hotspots.
2. Re-commit Proceeds of Crime funding to community crime prevention activities – the Coalition will reverse Labor's decision to prop up its Budget by freezing funds collected under Proceeds of Crime laws and return this money to the community.

In addition, a Coalition Government will also refocus Australia's refugee and humanitarian programme to provide a guaranteed minimum of 1,000 places for women at risk and their dependents. These people, waiting in refugee camps and other desperate places offshore, are among the most vulnerable of all who seek a better life in Australia. They have neither the means nor the opportunity to escape their circumstances.

Since Labor came to power in 2007/2008 the number of places for Women at Risk has fallen well below this guaranteed minimum for every year until 2011/2012. Indeed, 2012/2013 will be the first year that Labor achieves the Coalition's guaranteed minimum of 1,000 places.

The Coalition will ensure that appropriate settlement services are provided to women at risk once they arrive in Australia.

The Coalition will not rest until we entirely eliminate violence against women. Violence is never acceptable as a way of settling disputes.

On a personal level, Tony Abbott is pleased to have yet again raised money for the Manly Women's Shelter, along with Carers Australia, in his annual Pollie Pedal charity ride. Mrs Margie Abbott is a patron of the Manly Women's Shelter.

Tony Abbott is also a proud White Ribbon Ambassador and supporter of the White Ribbon campaign, Australia's only national, male-led primary prevention campaign to end men's violence against women. As an Ambassador, Tony Abbott is not only a leader of the campaign, but is also committed to incorporating the White Ribbon values into his daily life.

2. What does your party see as the major challenges in addressing violence against women and their children?

Violence against women is one of the most serious issues we face as a society. It is an issue which can have life or death consequences and which is of paramount importance to women.

Women seeking to escape from domestic violence currently deal with an uncoordinated and uncertain system, particularly when looking for legal support, refuge, counselling for themselves and their children and appropriate housing. It is a complex issue requiring multiple agency responses across both State and Federal governments.

It is for this reason that the Coalition is committed to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

Regrettably, the Gillard Government has been strong on rhetoric but weak on delivery when it comes to addressing violence against women and their children.

Indicative of this was the delay in launching the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and the Government's failure to properly advance and implement the White Ribbon Workplace Programme.

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* has bipartisan support. It is therefore disappointing that the first three-year implementation plan, which was due for release in July 2011, was not released until September 2012. It is difficult to reconcile the Government's claims that it is committed to eliminating violence against women when it was more than a year late in releasing the implementation plan for what is only stage 1 of a twelve year strategy.

Addressing violence against women requires a genuine commitment to practical solutions. Delays and lack of action on the part of the Gillard Labor Government risks undermining the bipartisan approach to implementing meaningful reforms and eradicating violence against women and their children.

Unlike the Gillard Labor Government, the Coalition will demonstrate through action rather than rhetoric its commitment to reducing violence against women and will deliver, as a matter of urgency, the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

3. Given that ending violence against women and girls requires long-term investment and a sustained approach, will your party continue to commit to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22?

The Coalition is fully committed to the implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22*.

We understand that violence against women has a profound and devastating impact on its victims and on the community. Nearly one in three Australian women are subjected to physical violence and almost one in five women are subjected to sexual violence during their lives. One in four children see their mother or stepmother suffer violence in their home. It is imperative that we take action to reduce these appalling statistics and to ensure domestic violence does not become intergenerational.

It is for this reason that the Coalition has held the Government to account by closely scrutinising the implementation of the first stage of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* which establishes the framework for the following phases.

Our concerns about delays in implementing the Plan and the apparent lack of commitment by the Gillard Labor Government led the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women, Senator Michaelia Cash, to move a motion in 2010 calling on the Government to expedite delivery of the Plan. This motion was agreed to by the Senate.

The need for such action is regrettable but equally demonstrates the Coalition's commitment to the Plan.

Zero tolerance of violence against women and their children is Coalition policy. This is a long-term plan which the Coalition is fully committed to. The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22* is an important component of this.

4. What funding commitment is your party making to address and prevent violence against women and their children?

Between now and 14 September 2013 the Coalition will be progressively providing further details of our plan to build a safe and secure Australia for Australian women and their children.

Once announced, the details of our policies will be available at www.liberal.org.au and www.nationals.org.au.