

Pre-Budget Submission 2015-2016

Australian Women Against Violence
Alliance

AWAVA

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) is one of the five National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government to bring together women's organisations and individuals across Australia to share information, identify issues and their solutions, to respond to and prevent violence against women and their children. AWAVA's role is to ensure that women's voices and particularly marginalised 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 recommendations within this submission, as well as on other issues relating to violence against women. Please contact AWAVA's Program Manager Ms. Sophie Hardefeldt (0428 541 396) or email: pm@awava.org.au

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ENDORSED BY:

AWAVA Member Organisations

1. Women's Services Network
2. Women With Disabilities Australia
3. Association of Women Educators
4. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
5. Australasian Council of Women and Policing
6. Australian Women's Health Network
7. Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services of South Australia
8. Domestic Violence Victoria
9. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Northern Territory
10. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence ACT
11. National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence Tasmania
12. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
13. Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women Australia
14. Domestic Violence NSW
15. National Union of Students
16. Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network
17. Women's Council For Domestic & Family Violence Services Western Australia
18. Women's Essential Service Providers Tasmania
19. Women's Legal Services Australia

1. FOREWORD

In this submission, AWAVA outlines policy recommendations for consideration by the Commonwealth Government in its 2015-16 budget. Over recent years, the Commonwealth Government has demonstrated leadership towards preventing male violence against women, improving community understanding and awareness of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, and putting legislation and services in place to protect and support women and their children who have experienced violence. AWAVA welcomed the Commonwealth Government's release of the *Second Action Plan* under *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022*. This *National Plan* is imperative for effectively responding to the needs of Australian women and their children. Its focus on prevention and emphasis on “working to increase gender equality to prevent violence from occurring in the first place”¹ is the bedrock of a cross-jurisdictional and comprehensive policy framework for the elimination of male violence against women. However, there needs to be greater focus on achieving substantive equality and an increased comprehension of how achieving substantive equality will significantly assist in addressing systemic contributors to men's violence against women.

In presenting this submission, AWAVA calls for holistic responses to the greatest areas of need:

- Adequate funding of *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022*;
- Committed and ongoing Commonwealth Government funding for the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, which provide vital funding for specialist women's services in the family and domestic violence sector;
- Adequate and sustainable funding of legal assistance services: Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, including specialist women's legal services that address the specific needs of women facing multiple forms of disadvantage; and
- Adequate and ongoing funding for women's specialist health services.

In 2008-09, the cost of domestic violence to our economy was estimated at \$13.6 billion. Without action, this is expected to rise to an estimated \$15.6 billion by 2021-22.² Domestic violence in particularly marginalised communities also has high economic costs. Without appropriate action, by 2021-22 domestic violence in immigrant and refugee communities will cost the economy over \$4 billion, domestic violence against women with disabilities will cost \$3.9 billion and domestic violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will cost \$2.2 billion.³ It is imperative that adequate

¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2011) *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022*. Available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf

² Commonwealth of Australia (2009) *The Cost of Violence Against Women and Their Children*, p 4. Available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf

³ Ibid. p 9.

funding is allocated to addressing this and other forms of male violence against women and that this funding is proportionate to the extent of the problem.

2. MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Male violence against women is a pervasive yet largely invisible form of violence that is recognised globally as one of the world's most insidious human rights abuses. The prevalence of men's violence against women throughout Australia is alarming. Across the country approximately 34% of women over the age of 18 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.⁴ 19% of women over the age of 18 have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15⁵, 17% of women over the age of 18 have experienced physical or sexual violence and 25% have experienced emotional abuse by a partner or former partner since the age of 15.⁶

The impact of men's violence against women for Australian women and communities is devastating. This violence is the "single biggest health risk to women aged 15 to 44 years"⁷ and can result in a range of significant health implications for women including physical injury, stress, anxiety and depression, as well as an increased risk of substance abuse and self-harm amongst others. In 2006–07, one out of every five homicides was domestic violence related. Further, more than half of the female homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner.⁸

The financial burden of domestic violence to the Australian economy is well documented and was estimated at \$13.6 billion in 2008–09.⁹ This is expected to rise to \$15.6 billion by 2021–22 and includes direct and indirect costs such as, "direct costs to employers from absenteeism, staff turnover and lost productivity; indirect costs, defined as employer tax share of public sector costs in the provision of services to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence; direct and opportunity costs to victims, perpetrators, family and friends; and the shared impact of domestic violence on the wider community, including inter-generational costs."¹⁰

Men's violence against women is common in all communities including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGTBIQ) people, young women, older women, women in regional, rural and remote areas and women in prison. Some groups are at a higher risk of violence. This

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) *Personal Safety Survey*. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter2002012>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) *Personal Safety Survey*. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter2002012>

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) *Personal Safety Survey*. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter7002012>

See also; <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Chapter8002012>

⁷ Australian Institute of Criminology (2009) *Research in Practise Summary Paper no. 7*, p. 3. Available at http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/5/6/E/%7b56E09295-AF88-4998-A083-B7CCD925B540%7drip07_001.pdf

⁸ Ibid. p. 3

⁹ Commonwealth of Australia (2009) *The Cost of Violence Against Women and Their Children*, p 4.

¹⁰ Laing, L and Bobic, N (2002) *Economic costs of domestic violence*. Available at http://adfvic.arts.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Economic_costs_of_DV.pdf

is often linked to their social marginalisation as well as a lack of access to information and services relating to this violence. Specific social groups that are impacted by higher rates of violence include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and people with disabilities. Some groups experience significant barriers to accessing service and support including LGBTIQ people, CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people with a disability and women in rural, regional and remote areas who may be reluctant to report violence because they live in a small community where everyone knows each other. It is vital that funding is specifically tied to initiatives that target the diverse needs of these communities in order to reduce their vulnerability to violence.

3. SOLUTIONS TO MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Male violence against women is prevalent but also preventable. Government responses to this violence must be multi-dimensional and comprehensive. They must include a focus on community-based primary prevention initiatives, which are vital to achieve the cultural and attitudinal change required to prevent violence from occurring. This includes prioritisation of initiatives that change community attitudes towards male violence against women, challenge gender stereotypes, increase awareness on issues relating to women's rights and take steps to realise gender equality and wider social equality. Policies addressing men's violence against women must target the root causes of violence, including misogynistic cultural practices, values and institutions. Adequately funded, long term, evidence-based awareness building initiatives are imperative to address negative cultural attitudes towards women. However, they must be paralleled by education initiatives that deliver strong unequivocal messages on gender equity and violence prevention curriculum to young people from the early years.

Effective early intervention must also be prioritised so that women and children at risk of violence are identified, and appropriate steps are taken to respond to this violence without causing further trauma to the victim, and to prevent it from re-occurring. These initiatives must be culturally safe, trauma informed and victim-led so that services respond to the complex experiences of women and children, meet their individual needs, and have the best outcomes for survivors of violence. Such initiatives must hold perpetrators of violence accountable rather than blame victims.

Crisis and support services are also necessary to support the many women and children that experience and will continue to experience violence until we are successful in bringing about substantive social and cultural change.

4. FUNDING CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

4.1 WOMEN'S SPECIALIST SERVICES ARE ESSENTIAL IN RESPONDING TO MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Robust funding is required for specialist women's services that can respond appropriately to women and children impacted by trauma. Increased awareness of male violence against women results in an increase in reporting and therefore an increased demand on front line services. Therefore, it is vital that

community awareness and attitudinal change initiatives are paralleled by an increase in funding for women's specialist services so that they are able to effectively respond to the needs of the increasing number of women and children who approach their services. This will also enable services to prevent, where possible, women and children from entering homelessness services.

The failure to sufficiently resource specialised women's services as demand increases directly impacts on early intervention and prevention work and risks women and children's lives. It is clear that current funding for specialist women's services is not adequate. According to Domestic Violence Victoria the "unprecedented demand for services, without commensurate funding to match this demand, has left family violence services struggling and under incredible pressure."¹¹

4.2 PRIMARY PREVENTION SAVES LIVES AND MONEY

As this paper has outlined, the human and economic costs of male violence against women within Australia are extensive. Male violence against women impacts one in every three Australian women and is the biggest health risk for women between the ages of 15-44.¹² Domestic violence alone costs the economy more than \$13.6 billion per annum. Current responses to this violence are neither sufficient to stop or prevent male violence against women neither can they adequately respond to the needs of women and children impacted by violence.

Primary prevention initiatives are imperative for stopping men's violence against women. These initiatives save lives and money. Primary prevention focuses on instigating long-term social and cultural change. It addresses the underlying causes of men's violence against women, namely gender inequality and discrimination and its interconnection with other forms of social inequality, to build a society in which women and men are equal and male violence against women does not occur. Investing in initiatives that prevent violence from occurring "protect[s] the physical, mental and economic well-being and development of individuals, families, communities and whole societies."¹³ It should help reduce the ongoing cost to the economy associated with this violence.

Violence prevention is a 'smart' investment, with multiple payoffs and savings

Preventing violence against women preserves valuable public and private funds. The 1994 United States Violence Against Women Act cost \$1.6 billion over the first five years while saving \$14.8 billion on direct and indirect expenses related to health care and survivor services, police response, lost productivity, reduced quality of life and death. In Australia, **it is estimated that the National Plan of Action could save \$23,673 for each woman prevented from experiencing violence.**

- UN Women Headquarters, 2010

¹¹ Domestic Violence Victoria et al (2014) *Submission to inform the development of the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010*, p.6. Available at http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/fairagenda/pages/174/attachments/original/1398574345/Joint_submission_to_NP_Action_Plan_-_Victorian_peaks_and_statewides.pdf?1398574345

¹² VicHealth (2004) *Preventing violence against women in Australia: Research summary*, p1. Available at <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/violence-against-women-in-australia-research-summary>

¹³ The World Health Organisation (2010) *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*, WHO Press, Geneva Switzerland, p. 1.

The increased focus on primary prevention initiatives over recent years means that we now have a strong evidence base for the benefits of policies and approaches that focus on stopping violence before it occurs. VicHealth's Framework for preventing violence against women provides evidence of the strong outcomes of primary prevention initiatives. It also outlines a framework for primary prevention to stop violence against women within Victoria, which focuses on intervention at the individual and relationship, organizational, community, and societal levels.¹⁴ It is essential that we continue to invest in primary prevention initiatives at the national and state level in order to take steps to prevent men's violence against women.

4.3 GENDER BUDGET ANALYSIS

AWAVA urges the adoption of a gender analysis for the 2015/16 Federal Budget. Budgets are not gender neutral, rather they are influenced by existing social structures and inequalities. Therefore, we require a holistic gender analysis to measure the impacts of tax and transfer changes on women and men. A gender analysis of the budget would assess the distributional impact on women and men and on households at different income levels. It is vital that this process be reinstated for the 2015/16 Budget and made publicly available in the Budget papers. This impact analysis should take consideration of the differential impact of tax and transfer changes on women, who are over-represented in low-income groups/households¹⁵ and as income support recipients.¹⁶

Other gendered experiences, such as violence and caring responsibilities, should be taken into account in assessing policy priorities in the Budget. For example, a policy such as the GP co-payment may appear to be gender neutral. However, the fact that 1 in 5 women first disclose domestic violence to their GP¹⁷, making these visits an important and accessible pathway to safety for many women, reveals the gendered implications of this policy. By assessing the impact of budgets for women and men, the Commonwealth Government will be in a strong position to ensure that Government funding does not indirectly discriminate against women. Further, it will be able to take additional steps to ensure that adequate services and support are provided to enable women's realisation of substantive equality.

AWAVA asserts that the Commonwealth Government should examine the gendered impacts of policy and funding allocations in the 2015/16 Budget, as well as take clear measures to address gender inequality. Further, we call for the reintroduction of the Women's Budget Statement to assess the

¹⁴ Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (2007) *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide Primary Prevention of Violence against Women in Victoria*. Available at <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/preventing-violence-before-it-occurs>

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008) *Australian Social Trends: Women's Incomes*. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter8002008>

¹⁶ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2011) *Statistical Paper No. 10 Income Support Customers: A Statistical Overview 2011*. Available at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/07_2012/stps10.pdf

¹⁷ Spangaro, J., and Zwi, A (2010) *After the Questions: Impact of Routine Screening for Domestic Violence in NSW Health Services*, pg. 22. Available at <http://www.kidsfamilies.health.nsw.gov.au/media/205701/rsdv-doh-report-after-the-questions-19-july-2011-copy-rights-complete.pdf>

implications of the budget for women and to highlight policy measures and initiatives that address gendered inequality.

5. RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 THE NATIONAL PLAN TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

AWAVA commends the Federal Government for its leadership in prioritising the issue of men's violence against women and in promoting a whole of government response to this issue. The Commonwealth Government's leadership in addressing men's violence against women is imperative for strengthening mechanisms to prevent and respond to this violence. The release of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* in February 2011 and the Second Action Plan under the National Plan in June 2014 demonstrates bipartisan support for reducing male violence against women and the Commonwealth Governments ongoing commitment to leading this process. COAG's (Coalition of Australian Governments) success in encouraging States and Territories to develop their own State and Territory Prevention Plans is also encouraging. Thus, for the first time ever, we have a national landscape where there is a policy understanding and appreciation of the impact of male violence against women across Federal, State and Territory jurisdictions. This gives us a unique opportunity to take serious and substantial action to prevent this violence.

However, the National Plan has been hindered by poor communication between government and civil society. The dissolution of the National Plan Implementation Panel (NPIP) as well as the failure to form Advisory Groups which were intended to provide advice to the NPIP on primary prevention, service delivery, justice responses and building the evidence base have left a real gap in engagement and communication with civil society. There is also a lack of understanding amongst civil society about the level of National Plan funding. AWAVA asserts that further investment is required to enable the effective implementation of the National Plan and the prevention of male violence against women and their children. We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to ensure that key initiatives under the plan are sufficiently and sustainably funded and that adequate funding is provided for prevention and early intervention initiatives. Given the extensive human and economic cost of male violence against women is it imperative that the Commonwealth Government's investment is proportional to the cost of this violence. There is also a critical need for the Government to communicate its funding approach with civil society and to outline how this funding will bring about the National Plan outcomes.

It is also vital that male violence against women responses are integrated into the continuum of services to women and children. This will ensure that there is a more effective and coordinated response to this violence. Further, specialist women's services must receive the necessary resources required to respond to increased service demands and to meet the needs of women and children who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence.

5.2 NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING AGREEMENT

Domestic Violence is the single biggest driver of homelessness for Australian women. According to Homelessness Australia 55% of female clients and 25% of all clients who present to specialist homeless services (SHS) cite domestic violence as their reason for leaving their home.¹⁸ For women, the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness is influenced by a range of factors. Their prolonged experiences of intimate partner violence, which is largely perpetrated within the home, “erodes the sense of safety and sanctuary that underscores the concept of home life and when women choose to leave a situation of violence, this primarily comes at the heavy price of them having to leave their homes.”¹⁹ In addition to this, there is a lack of adequate and affordable housing throughout Australia. This results in increased rates of housing stress as well as increased homelessness amongst women, who are also disadvantaged by gender inequalities in employment and income, including superannuation.²⁰ Recent research also highlights the increasing number of older women who are experiencing homelessness for the first time.²¹ Domestic violence, relationship breakdowns and women’s increased economic insecurity are key factors in older women’s vulnerability to homelessness.²² In spite of the rise in older women’s homelessness less than 10% of homelessness services target single older women.²³ Therefore, there is a strong need for increased data around older women’s experience of homelessness and an increase in specialist services for single older women who are homeless.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement provides vital commonwealth funding for 1500 SHS’s, including a diverse range of services that provide specialist support for women and children who are experiencing homelessness as a result of domestic and family violence. These services are essential for ensuring the safety of women who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence within the home. Women who do not have access to alternative accommodation options are more likely to remain in a violence relationship and are therefore exposed to an increased risk of violence.

It is vital that the Commonwealth Government continue its funding under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and that as a minimum this funding is indexed to the level of the CPI on an ongoing basis. This will ensure that Specialist Homelessness Services remain economically viable and are able continue to provide vital services to women and children who are experiencing violence.

¹⁸ Homelessness Australia (2013) *Homelessness and Women Factsheet*. Available at

http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/Fact_Sheets/Homelessness_and_Women.pdf

¹⁹ Oberin, J and Mitra-Kahn, T (2013) *Stopping Violence before it Occurs: Responding to the Pathways into Gendered Homelessness, Parity*, Volume 26(7), p. 1.

²⁰ Homelessness Australia (2013), *Op Cit*. No 10.

²¹ Homelessness Australia (2013) *Homelessness and Older People: Fact Sheet*. Available at

http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/images/publications/Fact_Sheets/Homelessness_and_Older_People.pdf

²² McFerran, L (2010) *It Could Be You: Female, Single, Older and Homeless*. Available at

<http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/It%20could%20be%20you%20Final.pdf>

²³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2012) *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness 2011*.

See also Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Homelessness Taskforce (2008) *The road home: A national approach to reducing homelessness*.

5.3 NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS

AWAVA is concerned about the Commonwealth Government's review of funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). Domestic and family violence remains the primary cause of homelessness for women and children. Currently, women and children escaping domestic violence risk having to return or remain in an unsafe environment because women's refuges and crisis services do not have the room to accommodate them.

NPAH funding has led to extensive system reforms within homelessness services, resulting in better connected service systems, innovative responses to homelessness and collaborative ventures across both government and non-government services. The removal of NPAH funding results in substantial funding reductions for specialist women's services sector, which will significantly reduce the capacity of services to meet the needs of women and children affected by domestic and family violence. This in turn will result in more women and children being turned away from services and remaining in unsafe environments.

Women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence are often required to navigate lengthy and fragmented processes when attempting to access safe and affordable housing. The processes includes moving between various types of accommodation that lack security of tenure and/or fail to provide a sense of safety. The lack of stability generated through constantly relocating can impact directly on the ability of women and children to attain a life free from violence. Additionally, the implications of children's experience of homelessness are extensive and there is strong evidence that children who experience homelessness are more likely to be homeless later in life.²⁴

With growing numbers of vulnerable people facing difficulty in securing access to affordable rental housing and high turn away rates from specialist homelessness services, including women's refuges, AWAVA firmly believes that we cannot afford to lose vital services funded through the NPAH. AWAVA is calling on the Commonwealth Government to continue its funding under the NPAH and to ensure as a minimum that this funding is indexed to the level of the CPI on an ongoing basis. However, this would only enable services to provide current levels of support. Significant increases in Commonwealth funding is required to enable women's specialist services to meet increasing service demands.

5.4 FUNDING FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The patriarchal nature of Australia's society means that women face widespread discrimination and disadvantage in all aspects of their lives. On average, women are less able to realise their human rights than men. Women are more likely to be poorer than men - the gender pay gap has increased to 19.9% calculated on full-time base remuneration²⁵ and this combined with caring responsibilities means women generally retire with significantly less superannuation than men. Women's health outcomes are

²⁴ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (2013) *Lifetime and Intergenerational Experiences of Homelessness in Australia*. Available at <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/projects/p80516>

²⁵ Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2014), *Australia's gender equality scorecard*, p. 3.

likely to be worse than men²⁶ and they often experience multiple and compounding forms of systemic disadvantage that may impact on their access to legal services. This can impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from CALD backgrounds, women with disability, older women, younger women, women in regional, rural and remote areas, LGBTIQ communities and women in prison.

Legal assistance services – Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services - including specialist women’s legal services and specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s legal services are vital to address this gap in service provision, for enabling women to access legal supports and for ensuring women’s rights are upheld. The provision of free and accessible legal support for women who experience disadvantage is imperative and we must continue to have properly funded specialist women’s legal services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s legal services. Such services have a thorough understanding of the nature and dynamics of domestic and family violence and why such violence is primarily perpetrated against women and children. These services are important for empowering and supporting women victims/survivors of violence. They provide a safe space for women and children and strongly support holding perpetrators to account. They also recognise the intersecting and compounding forms of disadvantage that women face for example, due to their sex; gender identity; sexual orientation or intersex status; culture and ethnicity; disability; age; and/or social and/or economic disadvantage, which can significantly limit women’s “full enjoyment of citizenship”, including access to justice.²⁷

AWAVA understands that the Commonwealth Government is in the process of reviewing its funding arrangements for legal assistance services and that the outcomes of this review will be finalised towards the middle of 2015. We call on the Commonwealth Government to ensure women are included as a priority group (see Attachment 1 for more information). Further, we call on the Commonwealth Government to take full consideration of the vital support that legal assistance services and particularly specialist women’s legal services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s legal services provide to women, including women who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence. Further, we also draw attention to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services in providing targeted and culturally appropriate support and legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It is also important that victims of violence have a range of legal services from which to choose so they can exercise agency or, where there is a conflict of interest, there is another legal assistance service to offer assistance.

AWAVA calls on the Commonwealth Government to ensure that women are included as a priority group in the new funding arrangements for legal assistance services. We call for an increase of funding for

²⁶ Australian women’s Health Network (2012) Women and Health and Well-Being. Available at <http://www.awhn.org.au/files.php?cat=1>

²⁷ Graycar, R and Morgan, J (1995) Disabling Citizenship: Civil Death for Women in the 1990’s? *Adelaide Law Review* 49, p. 76.

legal assistance services as recommended by the Productivity Commission.²⁸ It is essential that funding for legal assistance services, including specialist women's legal services, is adequate and sustainable.

5.5 FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S SPECIALIST HEALTH SERVICES

Women's health centres have been at the forefront of the development and delivery of primary preventative initiatives since their establishment in the 1970s. These initiatives are often facilitated across geographically large and demographically diverse catchments of population. However, these services face chronic under-funding and do not receive adequate funding for the vital work they undertake.

AWAVA is concerned about the implications of the changes to preventative health funding arrangements in the 2014-15 budget, including the de-funding of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) and the termination of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health (NPAPH). The loss of both the ANPHA and NPAPH mean cuts to important primary prevention health programs around the country that significantly reduce long-term health system costs. Funding for Medicare Locals will also end on 30 June 2015. While Medicare Locals will be replaced by the Primary Health Networks initiative, we are concerned about the amount of time it will take to establish these new Primary Health Networks and the period of inactivity during this process. The Primary Health Networks also lack a focus on preventative health and health promotion initiatives, which are imperative for effectively responding to and preventing violence against women.²⁹

In addition, AWAVA is aware that the Commonwealth Government is currently reviewing all Health Grants administered by the Commonwealth Department of Health. We call on the Commonwealth Government to consider the vital role that specialist women's health services play in the prevention and early intervention of male violence against women. We call on the Commonwealth Government to provide adequate funding to these services to enable them to continue to provide vital health care services to women and children. We also call on the Commonwealth Government to recognise the role that preventative health services play in early identification and intervention in cases of male violence against women and to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to these services.

FURTHER INFORMATION

AWAVA is able to provide supporting information or provide contacts for further discussion, on any of the issues or recommendations within this submission, as well as on other issues relating to violence against women. Please contact AWAVA's Program Manager Ms. Sophie Hardefeldt (0428 541 396) or email: pm@awava.org.au.

²⁸ Productivity Commission (2014), *Access to Justice Arrangements*, Final Report, Recommendation 21.4, p. 63.

²⁹ Baum, F and Javanparast, S (2014), *Medicare Locals*. Available at <http://theconversation.com/federal-budget-2014-health-experts-react-26577>