



Mark Speakman

Attorney General
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Anne Ruston

Federal Minister for Families and Social Services

Bronnie Taylor

Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women

MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID-19: FUNDING TO BOOST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Domestic violence victim-survivors will have more vital help available during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the NSW and Federal Governments today investing more than \$21 million to boost frontline services and other supports.

The investment comprises \$12.8 million from the NSW Government and \$8.8 million from the Commonwealth Government.

NSW Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said the pandemic has potentially increased the risk of abuse in already violent homes.

“Strict health orders in recent weeks have told people to stay home to help slow the spread of COVID-19. But domestic violence victims don’t have a safe home to begin with, so more have sought assistance and are presenting with more complex needs,” Mr Speakman said.

“Today’s package responds to a range of issues raised with the Government to help protect women and children and ultimately to save lives.”

Federal Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston said the Australian Government moved quickly to commit \$150 million to support states and territories and ensure services had the capacity to manage the fallout of the pandemic.

“Programs that provide safer housing, emergency accommodation, counselling, crisis support, helpline support, behaviour change programs and interventions, as well as responding to challenges in rural and remote locations are the priority,” Minister Ruston said.

“We are working closely with all states and territories to identify funding priorities and to find the best way forward to improve support for those at-risk of violence.”

NSW Minister for Women Bronnie Taylor said every person has the right to live a life free from violence and these funds will benefit all victims seeking support.

“This investment will help highly vulnerable people right across NSW, particularly

Aboriginal, multicultural and regional and remote women, who face extra barriers when they take the courageous step of reporting their abuse,” Mrs Taylor said.

Helen Silvia, Chairperson of Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) the state’s peak body for specialist domestic violence services, welcomed the Government’s funding and said it would help support victim-survivors during the pandemic and recovery period.

“Our members have reported increased complexity working with women experiencing domestic violence, while our workforce and services are also facing more pressures due to COVID-19, so these funds will certainly help to alleviate that,” Ms Silvia said.

Today’s announcement will deliver the following additional supports:

Frontline support services

- Funding for frontline specialist domestic violence services to respond to increasing demand and complexity of cases;
- A boost for the 24/7 NSW Domestic Violence Line that provides crisis counselling and support referrals;
- Increasing staff at [Legal Aid’s](#) NSW Domestic Violence hotline, while bolstering legal information available online;
- More service capacity at the State’s [Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services](#); and,
- Resources for targeted responses to especially vulnerable groups like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability, multicultural communities, LGBTIQ communities and women living in rural and remote areas.

Escaping violent homes

- Access to more funding for the State’s 84 women’s refuges for additional staff, more training, and basic supports like food vouchers or safe phones for victims;
- Funding to allow companion animals to be accommodated in women’s refuges or animal shelters so women can leave violent homes without worrying their pet will be harmed; and
- A six-month ‘pop-up’ safe house in the Manly area to give highly vulnerable women and their children temporary and emergency accommodation.

Staying safe at home

- More duress alarm devices for victims to access if they’re remaining in their home as part of the [Staying Home Leaving Violence](#) (SHLV) program;
- Improved access to services for SHLV clients; and
- Temporary accommodation for perpetrators if they’re removed from a property by police and have nowhere else to stay (or based on protection orders) so that victims can remain safely at home.

Holding perpetrators to account

- A boost in funding for men's behaviour change programs to respond to heightened demand while adjusting their service delivery to work remotely, if required;
- More support for [No To Violence](#) to expand their training and support for frontline staff who deliver perpetrator programs across NSW; and
- Funding for an app that helps perpetrators understand and therefore comply with Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs).

Raising awareness

- Extension of [Toolbox Talks](#) – a program that educates and empowers thousands of workers in the construction and mining industries to identify and report abuse; and
- A digital campaign to support victims and encourage the community to report domestic violence.