

19 January 2017

The Hon Michael McCormack MP  
Minister for Small Business

Via online submission at <http://www.treasury.gov.au>

Dear Minister McCormack,

Thank-you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Australian Government's 2017-2018 Budget.

### **Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)**

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, amplifying the work of its member organisations and friends and supporters.

AWAVA works towards this by harnessing the expertise of its members, consisting of specialist women's services from the responding to violence against women sector, and working closely with government. Its members include organisations from every state and territory in Australia and represent organisations working on diverse issues including domestic and family violence, sexual assault, feminist pedagogy and women with disabilities.

### **The 2017-2018 Budget**

AWAVA's primary concern in relation to the Budget remains the under-funding of services responding to and preventing violence against women, despite increased funding in various places and for various programs. For this reason we provide [AWAVA's response to the 2016-2017 Budget](#) as our submission on the 2017-2018 Budget. We acknowledge that since the last budget, funding has been announced for the Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, in the form of a general break-down of the \$100 million allocated for the Plan over three years. This includes including some additional funding for Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and community legal centres, although the latter still face substantial cuts at the end of the financial year. The recent announcement of a one-year extension for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) means that services will no longer lose NPAH funding at the end of June 2017. However, we still need longer-term security, adequate funding levels and a funding system that recognises the critical [importance of specialist women's services](#) and other specialist services.

AWAVA looks forward to continuing to contribute to the Australian Government's efforts to end violence against women and children. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely,

Merrindahl Andrew

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## Australian Women Against Violence Alliance: Interim analysis of the 2016-17 Australian Government Budget

AWAVA has expressed serious concern about the national commitment to supporting women and children facing violence. We have welcomed the small additional commitment to implementing the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (\$33 million in 2016-17), as we welcomed the Women’s Safety Package last year. However, these commitments are just a tiny fraction of what is needed. For more of our response, see AWAVA’s media release, which is appended to this document.

This interim analysis represents our best efforts as at 6 May to interpret the budget in terms of spending on programs and initiatives relating to violence against women. We will provide more information as we obtain it. Please feel free to contact the AWAVA team (Policy Officer Megan Morris, [policyofficer@awava.org.au](mailto:policyofficer@awava.org.au) or Program Manager Merrindah Andrew, [pm@awava.org.au](mailto:pm@awava.org.au)) if you would like to discuss the Budget as it impacts on our collective work.

### Violence Against Women:

The Budget included an announcement of “\$100 million over three years” for Domestic and Family Violence – New Initiatives to Break the Cycle of Violence.

This is more accurately expressed as a commitment of \$33m (mostly) new money in 2016-17 to implement the Third Action Plan under the National Plan. The \$33 million per year in the following two years is actually only \$23.3m per year, as \$10m p.a. is being cut out of Office for Women’s work on violence<sup>1</sup>, as this excerpt shows:

#### Domestic and Family Violence — new initiatives to break the cycle of violence

Expense (\$m)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Department of Social Services	-	33.3	33.3	33.3	-
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	-	-	-10.0	-10.0	-12.2
<b>Total — Expense</b>	-	<b>33.3</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>-12.2</b>

The Government will provide \$100.0 million over three years from 2016-17 toward Commonwealth initiatives to break the cycle of violence against women and children. The Commonwealth initiatives will draw on the recommendations of the Third Action Plan 2016-19 (the Plan) under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and build on existing Commonwealth initiatives under previous action plans.

The final report of the Council of Australian Governments’ Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children, released on 1 April 2016, will inform the development of the Plan.

This measure builds on the \$101.2 million that was provided through the 2015-16 MYEFO measure titled *Women’s Safety Package*.

<sup>1</sup> See [Social Services Portfolio Budget Statement \(PBS\) Table 1.2: Department of Social Services 201617 Budget measures Part 1: Measures announced since the 201516 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook \(MYEFO\) pg 21.](#)

DSS have confirmed the above and have stated “\$32.2m over three years has been redirected from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Social Services for the Third Action Plan. This funding will be used for measures to reduce violence against women and their children.”

While the National Plan is supposed to also focus on sexual violence it is not mentioned in the “new initiative”. This is further demonstration of the narrowing of the agenda to focus only on domestic and family violence. Given that consultations for the Third Action Plan have been specifically addressing sexual violence – a positive development – it would seem that the title of this initiative is a misnomer. AWAVA opposes any steps to reduce the National Plan to a plan on domestic and family violence only. It is meant to be a plan to reduce violence against women and their children broadly.

As the Third Action Plan hasn’t been developed yet, we don’t know what the money will be spent on. It is also possible that the money announced may include other funding that we already know about, or which appears elsewhere. However, DSS have told us that the “\$100million over three years” does not include any of the \$30m allocated for the COAG funded awareness campaign<sup>2</sup> that recently commenced. We are chasing up more details.

### **National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children:**

The “\$100million over three years” (see caveats above) is additional to baseline funding for the National Plan. It would reasonably be expected that the National Plan would be funded over its whole life-span (2010-2022). Over the last two budgets (2014-15 and 2015-16) all funding for the National Plan has been shown under a line item called “National Initiatives” in the DSS budget papers, which has previously not included any non-National Plan items<sup>3</sup>. DSS have confirmed that in the new Budget, the National Initiatives line now includes the “\$100Mill over 3 years” and also other initiatives under the National Plan (ANROWS, 1800RESPECT etc). However, in this Budget, some non-National Plan measures (including the Women’s Safety Package<sup>4</sup> but also measures not relating to violence against women) are also included within this line, which explains the increases to this in 2016-17 and in the following two years (tapering back to around \$30mill in the fourth year). Clearly this level of reporting is completely inadequate and non-transparent.

DSS have said they will provide us with a complete breakdown of measures under the “National Initiatives” line, flagging National Plan and Non-National Plan measures.

### **Homelessness funding:**

As expected, homelessness funding which includes specialist homeless services and women’s refuges is still due to end on 30 June 2017. Funding for these services is provided through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) under the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).<sup>5</sup> Morrison (2015) and Porter (2016) have both stated this funding has a “focus on domestic violence” however it is near impossible to gauge how much of this funding actually goes into specialist services and, furthermore, how much of this “specialist services” funding actually reaches the services that “focus on domestic violence” (DFSV). This lack of clarity has been an ongoing concern and needs to be addressed at the reporting and monitoring level. For example, agreements need to include housing options for women escaping violence as a performance indicator for the agreement. We are currently asking DSS for a breakdown of the funding information.

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<sup>2</sup> Funding for the national attitude change campaign is in the Social Services Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) under 2.1 – Special Accounts – Other services – Services for Other Entities and Trust Moneys on Page 61.

<sup>3</sup> See Social Services Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) line “National Initiatives” under “Table 2.2.1: Expenses for Families and Communities” pg 64.

<sup>4</sup> For details of the Package, see <http://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/release-womens-safety-package-to-stoptheviolence>

<sup>5</sup> See the Social Services Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Pg 89 line “housing and homelessness”

### **Legal assistance:**

Community Legal Centres— where the top two areas of work are family violence related, needed \$14.4 million additional funding to address their 160,000 annual turn-away figure (including but not limited to domestic violence).<sup>6</sup> The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) state that Community Legal Centres under the National Partnership agreement for Legal Assistance, under the Attorney General Portfolio Budget papers have not received any additional funding to address this but will also lose \$-34.83Mill between July 2017 and June 2020; which will cut their service capacity by a third.<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services have also had cuts to its funding. These cuts amount to over \$6Mill. Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services and Legal Aid Commission, which face serious underfunding, have not been provided with any additional funding.<sup>8</sup>

### **Australian Women's Health Network:**

The Budget did not restore any funding to the Australian Women's Health Network (AWHN) after last year's de-funding. This is despite AWHN and its members doing crucial work in preventing and responding to violence against women.<sup>9</sup> For more information on this please see the Australian Women's Health Network Australian Women's Health Network call for support.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The [Productivity Commission Access to Justice Arrangements Report](#) recommended an immediate additional investment of \$200 million for civil law legal assistance, which would be \$160,000 in National-level investments (recom 21.4). See <http://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2016/04/government-fund-community-legal-aid/>

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis, see

[http://www.nacalc.org.au/cb\\_pages/news/MediaReleaseBudgetcutstolegalassistanceserviceshitvulnerablehardest.php](http://www.nacalc.org.au/cb_pages/news/MediaReleaseBudgetcutstolegalassistanceserviceshitvulnerablehardest.php)  
For the Attorney General Portfolio Budget papers please see <https://www.ag.gov.au/Publications/Budgets/Budget2016-17/Pages/Portfolio-Budget-Statements-2016-17.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.natsils.org.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Hbt\\_3\\_IJWfo%3d&portalid=8](http://www.natsils.org.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Hbt_3_IJWfo%3d&portalid=8)

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/national-womens-antiviolence-group-losses-funding-could-close-20151224-gluyge.html>

<sup>10</sup> See <http://awhn.org.au/call-for-support/>

## Appendix:

### Media release

#### **Violence against women: the 2016-17 Budget evades the hard challenges**

The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) has expressed serious concern about the national commitment to supporting women and children facing violence.

AWAVA welcomed the small additional commitment to implementing the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (\$33 million in 2016-17), as we welcomed the Women's Safety Package last year. However, these commitments are just a tiny fraction of what is needed.

AWAVA Program Manager Merrindahl Andrew said, "After the issue was deemed a 'national priority' by the Australian Government, AWAVA together with other advocates hoped this priority would be reflected in the Budget. Once again, however, the Government has deferred the challenge to a later date. A dedicated funding stream for preventing and responding to violence, together with a major funding boost and financial security for services, are among the minimum responses needed to truly make a difference."

The previously-declared "national emergency" of domestic and family violence kills on average one woman in Australia each week, while sexual violence continues to have widespread and devastating impacts on women and children. The scale of the Budget's response is not proportionate. The Victorian Government recently recognised the scale and urgency of family violence as a problem and responded accordingly. This Budget is a missed opportunity to do the same at a national level. Fair Agenda has estimated that \$4 billion over two years is required to match the Victorian response.

For example, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services need an extra \$28 million to ensure national coverage for their legal services and supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence. This Budget leaves hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait women without access to the services they need.

"Not only is the Budget a missed opportunity; it entrenches cuts to the services that work directly with victims/survivors," Ms Andrew said. "Cuts to legal assistance, including women's legal services that support victims/survivors, are going ahead, reducing community legal centres' capacity by one third (\$34 million over the forward estimates). And homelessness service funding, including funding for women's refuges, is still due to end at June 2017. This kind of funding uncertainty is exactly what we don't need."

AWAVA calls on the Australian Government to undertake more transparent reporting that accurately represents the full picture of spending on measures to address violence against women, as well as bringing back a rigorous gender budgeting process. For example, Minister Porter recently noted that homelessness funding had a "specific focus on domestic violence", but there is no public information on how much homelessness funding is going to specialist women's services or services targeting women facing violence. If we are serious about addressing violence, such information needs to be public.

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