

MEDIA RELEASE

10.2.2021

Investing in the safety and wellbeing of women and their children

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, Stopping Family Violence, and the Western Australian Council of Social Services would like to congratulate the WA Labor Government on its 60 million dollar investment in expanding its response to family and domestic violence in this State.

The focus on ensuring that women and their children have access to housing is a recognition of how critical having a safe home is for victim-survivors of family and domestic violence to be able to leave and recover from violence. A shortage of rental accommodation and a lack of investment in public and community housing has created a systemic shortage of affordable housing, leaving many victim-survivors faced with the difficult decision to leave and risk becoming homeless or stay with a violent partner.

Kedy Kristal, Acting CEO of the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing welcomed the news, saying "The WA Labor Government's announcement is an important step toward ensuring that victim-survivors have safe housing. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that having access to a safe and affordable home is more important than ever. The WA Labor Government's decision to focus on housing victim-survivors shows a commitment to our state's most vulnerable people as we work towards a new 'COVID-normal' and recovery."

Louise Giolitto, CEO of the Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), also welcomed the announcement today of additional funding for services to support victims-survivors of family and domestic violence: "It is critical in our community that women, children and young people who have suffered physical or sexual abuse are confident that they can come forward to tell their story, knowing they will receive the trauma counselling and individual advocacy that they need to heal and move on with their lives."

CEO of Stopping Family Violence, Damian Green, is "pleased to see the investment in primary prevention and the Caring Dads program. The Caring Dads program was specifically designed from the premise that violence against women and violence against children are intricately intertwined, and that these two issues both can and should be addressed together. Our child protection and child and family mental health service systems tend to work primarily with mothers; a trend that is exacerbated when fathers are deemed to be high risk. This means that those fathers who most need to be monitored and helped by our intervention systems are not involved. There are numerous advantages to changing practice to better include fathers in efforts to enhance the safety and well-being of their children including the potential to improve father-child relationships, offer an additional route to ending violence against women, and model accountability."

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing strongly supports the funding for a domestic violence forensic unit in Western Australia. Currently victim-survivors of physical family and domestic violence are often seen in an emergency department or by their GP. The quality of this response can depend on time and skill level. A dedicated service will support criminal justice outcomes through enhanced quality of evidence, increased likelihood of successful convictions, increased offender accountability and most importantly improved safety outcomes for victims.

These measures are a welcome step to continuing the important work of creating a comprehensive, multifaceted response to family and domestic violence in Western Australia.

We would like to thank our partners in the community services sector and beyond for their tireless advocacy to improve responses to and prevention of family and domestic violence.

Key points (for reference):

- \$60 million boost to help prevent family and domestic violence
- Two new one-stop FDV hubs to open in regional WA and Perth, in addition to the two recently established by McGowan Government
- \$29.5 million Safe Home Safe Family package for women and children fleeing violence
- Initiatives to stop the cycle of abuse and prevent violence before it starts, including additional support for Respectful Relationships and Caring Dads
- An Aboriginal-specific rapid rehousing pilot trial will also support up to 40 women and their children to get into private accommodation.
- In Broome, an Aboriginal-led Specialist Family Violence Court will be established through a \$4.8 million commitment – providing support to Aboriginal women who have experienced violence and special interventions for perpetrators of violence.
- Justice reforms will also include the introduction of an FDV-focused pilot program for women in prison to support a safe transition back into the community.
- A further \$4 million will be invested in new Supporting Survivors initiatives to help women exiting refuge to move on with their lives – including subsidised driving lessons, subsidised dental treatment and law changes to provide survivors with five days of unpaid domestic violence leave.

-Ends-

Media queries:

Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing: Kedy Kristal, 0401 934 479

Stopping Family Violence: Damian Green, 0448 911 009

WACOSS: Louise Giolitto, CEO 0411 534 911

1800RESPECT tagline:

When writing articles that touch on sexual assault, or family and domestic violence, we request that you include 1800RESPECT’s tagline at the end of your piece. Reading about violence and abuse can be triggering. Including their tagline in your article allows those who are impacted by media coverage to know immediately who they can reach out to for support.

Tagline: “If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000.”