

Positive budget commitments fall short of bold measures needed for women's safety, still leave holes in safety net

Fair Agenda

"This budget, while making positive strides, falls short of the bold and comprehensive measures we need to ensure women's safety and wellbeing," says Renee Carr, Executive Director of gender equity movement Fair Agenda.

"It's great to see the Government's investment in female-dominated workforces; and support for parents - particularly single mothers. Investing in women's economic security is a critical step towards a more safe and equitable future. We also welcome the additional funding announced for women's safety – but these don't go far enough to close all the holes in the safety net women should be able to rely on," she added.

Tonight's budget invests a further \$589 million to women's safety over the next five years. It brings total federal funding for women's safety to \$723 million this financial year; and to \$1.9 billion over the next three years. Experts have been calling for \$1 billion annually to properly resource the new National Plan for women's safety.

"We welcome the government's boost to funding to address gender-based violence, but the increase to \$723 million this financial year still falls short of the \$1 billion annually experts say is needed. Many women will still be left without the support they need to be safe and recover from violence," added Renee Carr.

"Women's safety services operate as a web of interconnected components, designed to work together to support those affected by violence. The government has taken steps to reinforce and repair parts of this safety net by adding much needed investment in perpetrator intervention, early intervention and First Nation's women's safety, but there are still significant gaps where women in need will slip through," she said.

"Critical areas such as sexual violence trauma counselling and specialist case management services still aren't resourced to help everyone reaching out to them. We're disappointed not to see anything in this budget that will help with that. Neglecting these essential aspects puts women at continued risk, there's a pressing need to strengthen the entire web of women's safety services - that requires significantly more investment."

"It is deeply disappointing that the government has not allocated additional funding to address the extensive wait times for trauma counselling services for sexual violence survivors. These survivors should not be further burdened by prolonged delays in accessing the support they desperately need. We call on the government to ensure that when survivors call 1800 RESPECT they can receive timely access to the specialist trauma counselling they deserve."

"It's positive to see an increased investment in women's safety. But it's disappointing that a larger boost to address desperate need in this area wasn't prioritised, given the \$20 billion a year that's due to be spent on the Stage 3 Tax Cuts. We shouldn't be prioritising tax cuts for our highest income earners above the safety and wellbeing of victims of domestic and sexual violence.

"We know that specialist services that can make a life-saving and life-changing difference to women trying to escape domestic violence, or recover from sexual assault – but they need to be resourced. These critical services are beyond capacity. Tonight's commitments don't go far enough to solve that problem."

"Sustained investment is necessary to achieve tangible progress in addressing gendered violence. The safety sector has emphasised the need for a minimum annual funding of one billion dollars, over the course of the new National Plan. We urge the government to prioritise secure and sustained investment in this critical area."

Renee Carr added: "We were disappointed not to see investments to address barriers to abortion access in tonight's budget. The recent Senate Inquiry has shone a light on the many barriers that force women to spend precious savings to access urgent abortion care. Investment in better abortion and contraceptive access is critical and we hope to see it prioritised in the coming months."

Media contact: Liz Hadjia, Campaign Manager, 0414 416 112, liz@fairagenda.org
Renee Carr, Executive Director, 0435 597 976, renee@fairagenda.org