



ACT
Government

Australian Capital Territory

BUDGET 2016-17

FOR CANBERRA

Safer Families

2016-17 ACT BUDGET SAFER FAMILIES

Tragic deaths have forced us to re-focus on family violence in the ACT. The \$21.42 million Safer Families package in the 2016-17 ACT Budget will drive the next phase of reform in whole of government, community-backed responses to family violence.

Increasing numbers of people are reporting family violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault. The impacts of this violence are devastating and well-documented.

Family violence crosses socioeconomic and cultural boundaries and imposes an economic burden on the whole community.

The ACT Government is pursuing urgent action for safer families in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

The ACT Government remains absolutely committed to the prevention of family and domestic violence. Governments across Australia are united in their commitment to action and this reflects the growing intolerance for family violence in the community.

This is a national problem. Family violence is everyone's problem.

In this budget the ACT Government is making a very clear statement of values, and a very clear statement of priorities. The values we hold - of caring for those who are vulnerable, who need a helping hand, of saying that this is an area of our community where good governments should and must act - are enshrined in the support this budget provides to address family violence.

This is the why the ACT Government has introduced the Safer Families levy to fund reforms that will address family violence.

Recent reports commissioned by the ACT Government demonstrate that the service system has not kept pace with the needs of victims of family violence and their families. The service system must also hold perpetrators to account.

Laurie Glanfield AM in his review of the service system in the ACT noted that 'There is remarkable agreement on the challenges facing the family violence sector and what needs to change.'

2016-17 BUDGET FUNDING TO ADDRESS FAMILY VIOLENCE

The 2016-17 ACT Budget is a catalyst for the next phase of reform in the family violence service system. That is why this budget funds a **\$21.42 million** family violence package over four years which includes funding for:

- > A full-time Coordinator-General for Family Safety and a dedicated safer families team to lead the whole of government effort to improve outcomes for victims and their families through collaboration, information sharing, awareness raising and working in partnership with the community **(\$3,070,000)**. A key priority for the Coordinator-General will be to work with community and government partners, including with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure that services provided are culturally appropriate.
- > Integrated case management and coordination of services for victims of family violence **(\$2,606,000)**.
- > Enhancing the quality assurance and supporting improved decision making of child protection services **(\$2,471,000)**.
- > Training for frontline staff right across Community and Emergency Services, Health and Education to support identification of family violence and early intervention **(\$770,000)**.
- > Increasing the capacity of specialist drug treatment services to deliver programs that integrate best practice in addressing family violence **(\$2,000,000)**.
- > Much needed investment in translation and interpreting services in ACT Courts and Tribunal and family violence specialist services **(\$1,223,000)**.
- > A brokerage and bond fund to assist victims seeking to escape family violence with immediate expenses **(\$315,000)**.
- > The Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre for the vital work they do to support people affected by family violence **(\$1,246,000)**.
- > An innovative residential behaviour change program for men who use or are at risk of using violence **(\$964,000)**.
- > ACT Policing to assist victims in applying for Domestic Violence Orders **(\$1,180,000)**.
- > Support for the first stage of implementation of the Joint Australian Law Reform Commission and NSW Law Reform Commission Report Family Violence – A National Legal Response **(\$1,457,000)**.
- > The Director of Public Prosecutions to strengthen criminal justice responses to alleged perpetrators of family violence **(\$1,363,000)**.
- > Legal Aid to improve access to legal services for victims of family violence **(\$1,214,000)**.

- > The Tara Costigan Foundation for the establishment of the Tara's Angels Service to provide a free caseworker service that supports victims as they rebuild their lives and break the cycle of violence (**\$40,000**, which includes **\$20,000** from the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund).



\$21.42

million

**SAFER FAMILIES
PACKAGE**

- > A Reportable Conduct Scheme to be operated by the ACT Ombudsman to improve the oversight of how organisations with a high level of responsibility for children respond to allegations of child abuse (**\$1,336,000**).

The Confiscated Assets Trust Fund (CAT Fund) allows proceeds of crime forfeited to the Territory to be used for priority criminal justice initiatives. The Attorney-General is directing \$850,000 from the CAT Fund for the Justice Reinvestment trial which involves providing services and supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing family violence. The trial will deliver additional resources to Aboriginal run organisations, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and ACT Policing. A key priority for the trial will be to examine how the services and supports delivered can impact on the incidence of family violence.

The Attorney-General will also utilise the CAT Fund to partner with Our WATCH in the 2016-17 financial year to help drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

WHAT WE KNOW

Family violence is a national problem and family violence is everyone's problem.

What we know about family violence nationally is that:

- > One third of women have experienced violence by someone who is known to them;
- > One in four Australian women have experienced emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15;

1 in 5



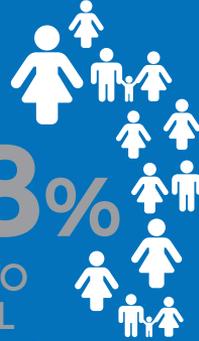
Australian women
have experienced sexual violence
since the age of 15

- > On average, one Australian woman is killed by her current or former partner each week; and
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to be victims of family violence than non-Indigenous women.

44.8%

OR CLOSE TO
HALF OF ALL
AUSTRALIANS

**have experienced
violence since the
age of 15**



REFORMS TO DATE

The ACT Government has been working proactively in recent years – including working closely with the community sector – to address family violence.

The **\$21.42 million** funding package for Safer Families in the 2016-17 ACT Budget is fundamental to the ACT Government's program of work to support social inclusion and equality in the ACT, and builds on the work already done.

A national and strategic response

The 2016-17 ACT Budget funding package reflects the ACT Government's public commitments in the Second Implementation Plan for the *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011–2017*. The ACT Strategy is our response to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2010–2022)*. The first priority of the Strategy is driving whole of community and government action to prevent violence and create an anti-violence culture. This year the ACT Government contributed \$246,000 to a joint Australian, state and territory government campaign to reduce violence against women and their children. This \$30 million campaign was launched in April 2016 and encourages adults to think about their attitudes to gender equality and respectful relationships.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 focuses the effort of governments on areas where national leadership and collaboration can make a difference to resolving issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The National Framework reflects a commitment from governments to move from a crisis-driven system to a public health model focused on universal support for all families with more intensive or targeted responses for families that need additional support.

The *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018* sets out the commitment of the ACT Government, our service partners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and, most importantly the community, to work together to recognise and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT and surrounding region. The relationship principles set out in the Agreement, which include respectful interaction, continuously improving the level of service and information sharing to simplify the service experience for the community, are closely aligned with the integration and outcomes focus of the Safer Families package funded in the 2016-17 ACT Budget.

Building better services

The ACT Government's investments in the service system across health, education and justice – outlined in the 2016-17 ACT Budget Social Inclusion Statement – support a safer and more inclusive community for all.

The focus on improving service responses funded by this budget will build on foundational work being undertaken as part of the *Human Services Blueprint*. The Blueprint is a long-term plan for community, health, education and justice systems to work together to better utilise government investment in social outcomes. Models of better service delivery are being trialled in West Belconnen and through services for families.

A Step Up for Our Kids is the ACT's new five year strategy to reform out of home care. A Step Up for Our Kids is designed to stem the rate of entry of children and young people into care through new placement prevention and reunification services; improve outcomes for children and young people in care; and, wherever possible, exit children and young people from care into permanent alternative families in a timely way.

The *Human Services Gateway* is a key reform to strengthen better services by acting as a single point of contact for people who are seeking assistance with housing, disability (including transitioning to the NDIS and employment assistance), support for children, young people and families, conflict resolution and debt management. People can access the information they need from a staff member or using the self-help function, and where appropriate are linked to a range of services and supports.

Significant legal reforms

Significant legal reform in the ACT over the past two years has been aimed at better protecting family violence victims. A new Family Violence Bill will be introduced to the Legislative Assembly in this Budget week (June 2016). The preamble to the Bill makes it clear that family violence is not acceptable in the ACT, and that freedom from family violence is a human right to be respected and protected by our justice system. Importantly the Bill has a new definition of family violence that will be significant in re-setting legal and community norms about what constitutes family violence. The new Bill includes a range of behaviours including physical violence, sexual violence, economic abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, stalking and using behaviour that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of violence. The Bill also recognises coercion and control as conduct that amounts to family violence.

THE NEXT STAGE OF REFORM

In April 2016, the ACT Government received two significant reports with recommendations for improving responses to family violence:

- > The Inquiry conducted by Laurie Glanfield AM titled *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the system level responses to family violence in the ACT* was provided to the Chief Minister (the Glanfield Inquiry).
- > The *Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the ACT* from the Domestic Violence Prevention Council was provided to the Attorney-General (the Death Review).

The *Domestic Violence Service System Gap Analysis Project Final Report* (March 2016) prepared by the Community Services Directorate also identifies areas for improvement in service system responses to family violence (the Gap Analysis).

The reports were made public in May 2016 in acknowledgement of their importance to the community.

The reports also highlight the importance and preventative value of community awareness of family violence.

The ACT Government is on the right track with a broad reform agenda that reflects best practice. However, the reports show that more needs to be done to improve service integration, collaboration and information sharing to achieve better outcomes for people experiencing family violence. There are consistent themes across the three reports that represent a service system focused on people and outcomes:

- > leadership and cultural change;
- > prevention and early intervention;
- > information sharing;
- > collaboration and integration; and
- > transparency and accountability.

The reports map the way forward for the next phase of maturity in the service system response. The initiatives funded in the 2016-17 ACT Budget support these areas of work.

There is also alignment with the priority areas for action identified by the Extraordinary Meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council in April 2015.

The new, full-time Coordinator-General for Family Safety will provide the **leadership** needed for a whole of government approach to preventing family violence. The Coordinator-General will lead the necessary change to embed an information sharing culture, promote collaboration, focus on key outcomes and report to Government on achievements. The Coordinator-General for Family Safety will be supported by a dedicated team and will be located in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

The ACT Government has invested more than \$2.6 million in integrated case management and coordination of services for victims of family violence. This will drive the next phase of maturity in **collaboration and integration** in the service system response to family violence.

The ACT Government will introduce changes to legislation to clearly authorise **information sharing** amongst ACT entities to better protect children and victims of family violence. Necessary safeguards will also be put in place. The ACT will learn from the experiences in other jurisdictions and be guided by the recommendations of the Glanfield Inquiry and the Death Review.

The ACT Government will build stronger **transparency and accountability** measures so the community can maintain confidence in the decisions and actions of the system, particularly in relation to child protection. To enhance quality assurance of child protection services, the ACT Government will fund an independent case analysis team to support improved decision making and establish a Child and Youth Protection Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee chaired by the Director-General, Community Services Directorate.

Additional funding is provided in the 2016-17 ACT Budget to support **vital crisis services** in this environment of raised awareness and reporting. This includes \$830,000 over four years for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and \$416,000 for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

The ACT Government is also making sure ACT Policing have the staff to assist victims with reporting family violence and accessing domestic violence orders. We are also investing in significant legal reforms and making sure that people can access the justice system with funding to Legal Aid and the DPP.

The family violence package in the 2016-17 ACT Budget is a catalyst for establishing a cohesive service response to family violence that is focused on people and supported by the community.

**If you, a child, or another person is in immediate danger
CALL 000.**

Or you can contact:

**Domestic Violence Crisis Service 24 hours crisis line on (02) 6280 0900;
or Canberra Rape Crisis Centre on 6247 2525.**

For more information on the 2016-17 ACT Budget visit the website at:

www.act.gov.au/budget

To contact Access Canberra you can phone 13 22 81 or go to their website at:

www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au

