

# Countering Violence Against Women and their Children

Recent tragic deaths in our community serve as a stark reminder of the seriousness and impact of domestic violence. The ACT Government is determined to support our hard-working service providers, police and emergency services, community organisations and schools to help end this scourge of violence, and aid those experiencing such violence.

New action to counter domestic violence in this year's Budget builds on long standing and ongoing support for the sector.

## In 2015-16, the Government will:

- expand the capacity of three key domestic and sexual violence crisis services. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Canberra Men's Centre will share in \$250,000 in additional funding to handle the current spike in demand for crisis assistance
- support ACT public schools to provide social and emotional learning programs to help kids learn early on in their lives about the importance of respectful relationships, and give them easy and accessible ways to get support, by dedicating \$615,000 in funding
- establish an ACT domestic violence data framework, fund women's safety grants and support the Domestic Violence Prevention Council with \$300,000 from the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund announced in March
- contribute to the national campaign to raise awareness about violence against women and children.

## Part of an ongoing effort to stop violence in our homes

This new funding builds on the ongoing funding for specialised accommodation, outreach and specialist domestic and sexual violence services, and for women and children at risk of homelessness including:

- providing crisis and transitional accommodation and outreach support to women with or without accompanying children who are leaving or have become homeless (reaching \$1.7 million in 2014-15)
- services specifically for women, including for:
  - Toora Women Incorporated to provide accommodation and outreach support services for single women (\$1 million a year)
  - Inanna Incorporated to provide supported accommodation and outreach services (over \$500,000), and
  - support for women with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault.
- the ACT also supports the safety of women and their children through the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund (totalling \$555,000). This funding has also supported the ACT Government's contribution to the establishment of the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
- providing funding to Legal Aid ACT (\$5.486 million in 2014-15). This funding allows legal aid services to be provided to those who could otherwise not afford legal representation or advice, including victims of domestic violence.

Our frontline service providers are working hard every day to help those experiencing family and domestic violence:

- ACT Policing attended 2,848 incidents with 1,984 criminal offences identified in 2014
- The Director of Public Prosecution commenced criminal proceedings against 425 defendants in 2013-14
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service supported people living with or escaping violence through 33,426 contacts in 2013-14. This included 1,408 crisis interventions such as attending with or immediately after police attended a victim's home
- Victim Support ACT supported 136 new clients in 2013-14
- Legal Aid ACT assisted in the delivery of 1,116 legal support services in 2013-14
- 15 per cent of families in the expanded Strengthening Families model have identified domestic violence as a current issue
- In 2013-14, 529 people with whose primary need was related to domestic or family violence received support from the ACT Specialist Homelessness Services.

## Additional funding is one part of wider reforms

The ACT is the leading jurisdiction in Australia in its proactive and coordinated approach to violence against women and children. During 2015 the Government will bring forward reforms beyond Budget initiatives, including:

- allowing prosecutors to use family violence victims' first statements to police as evidence at trial
- making certain that interim domestic violence orders can remain in place until criminal charges are finalised
- better recognising the harm that results when a person strangles their partner
- reforming the victims of crime assistance scheme to make it easier and faster to get financial help and counselling services.

The Government will also establish a Coordinator-General for Domestic and Family Violence in the ACT which will oversee strategic efforts in this area and drive the Second Implementation Plan for the *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy 2011-2017*.