

Strengthening the NSW response to domestic and family violence

Domestic Violence NSW
Pre-Budget Submission 2022-23

D O M E S T I C
V I O L E N C E
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DVNSW Funding Priorities

1. Increase funding to the specialist domestic and family violence sector by 50%
2. Fund domestic and family violence prevention
3. Invest in social housing and homelessness services
4. Fund a ten-year workforce strategy for the specialist domestic and family violence sector
5. Double the funding to Domestic Violence NSW – the peak organisation for the specialist domestic and family violence sector

Executive summary

There has been a **9.8 per cent increase in reports of domestic violence to police from June 2019-June 2021**, and a sharp rise in the number of people seeking specialist homelessness services who have experienced family and domestic violence.¹ Domestic and family violence has a wide-ranging impact on the NSW economy, from justice, corrections and police to housing and homelessness, community services, women and child protection.

With the majority of violence perpetrated against women, a Price Waterhouse Cooper report estimated that **violence against women costs \$21.7 billion a year**, with governments (Federal and State and Territory) bearing an estimated \$7.8 billion a year, comprising health, administration and social welfare costs.² This submission calls on the NSW Government to stop it before it starts and invest in the supports victim-survivors need; an investment which will reduce the long-term costs of domestic and family violence to the community and the economy. Underrepresentation within national prevalence estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, pregnant women, women with disability and women who are homeless may add a further \$4 billion to the cost of violence against women and their children in Australia each year. It is also estimated that the second generational impacts from violence against women and their children is estimated to cost the Australian economy \$333 million per annum.³

The specialist domestic and family violence service sector is at the frontline of prevention and response to domestic and family violence. The sector includes crisis and refuge services, transitional accommodation and community housing providers, family support services, Aboriginal controlled organisations, specialist Culturally and Linguistically Diverse organisations, specialist homelessness service providers, men's behaviour change programs, community organisations working with high-risk communities, specialist women's legal support services, women and children's support services and Safe at Home programs.

Domestic Violence NSW are calling on the NSW Government to invest in the specialist domestic and family violence sector to ensure quality, holistic and long-term support is provided to victim-survivors, vulnerable children and their families.

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) funding requests support the NSW Government's commitment to Closing the Gap, in particular through Target 13: to reduce the incidence of DFV experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls by 50% by 2031, headed towards 0. The funding asks are also aligned to the NSW's obligations under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children and the NSW Health Strategy to Prevent Domestic Violence.

The DVNSW funding priorities in this submission also support the following *Premier's Priorities* to break the cycle of disadvantage, and the *Stronger Communities Cluster State Outcomes*.

¹ Equity Economics (2021). *Rebuilding Women's Economic Security – Investing in Social Housing in New South Wales*, Sydney

² Price Waterhouse Coopers (2015). A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women. <https://www.pwc.com.au/publications/economic-case-preventing-violence-against-women.html>

³ KPMG, (2016). The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia

Premier's Priorities supported by this funding:

- Protecting our most vulnerable children by decreasing the proportion of children and young people re-reported at risk of significant harm by 20% by 2023.
- Increasing permanency for children in out-of-home care by doubling the number of children in safe and permanent homes by 2023 for children in, or at risk of entering, out-of-home care.
- Reducing the number of domestic violence reoffenders by 25% by 2023.
- Reducing street homelessness across NSW by 50% by 2025.

Stronger Communities Cluster State Outcomes supported by this funding:

- **Children and families thrive:** ensuring the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable, children, young people and families, and protecting them from the risk of harm, abuse and neglect (State Outcome 2)
- **Efficient and effective legal system:** Resolving matters through legal services, the administration of courts and tribunals, and client-facing justice services to victims and vulnerable people (State Outcome 3)
- **People have a safe and affordable place to live:** Assisting people who are unable to access or maintain appropriate housing, including homelessness services (State Outcome 4)
- **Reduce reoffending:** Operating the State's corrections system, including support for, and management of, adult and juvenile offenders in correctional centres and the community (State Outcome 6)
- **Safer communities:** Preventing, detecting and investigating crime; maintaining social order and community safety; promoting road safety and supporting emergency management (State Outcome 7).

Endorsements

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) endorses the submissions of the following organisations:

- DVNSW Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service submission.
- Not To Violence submission.
- Homelessness NSW submission.
- NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) submission.
- Y Foundations submission.
- ACON submission.
- Women's Trauma Recovery Centre.

1. Increase funding to the specialist domestic and family violence sector by 50%

Funding requirement

DVNSW are calling for a 50% increase of the current \$90 million per year investment to **\$135 million per year** (which includes funding from the federal-state partnership) to specialist domestic and family violence services.

Proposed initiatives

- Urgently increase base-funding to specialist Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) services and organisations to ensure a sustainable, well-resourced sector that can provide quality support for victim/survivors experiencing gendered violence.⁴
- Increase funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist domestic and family violence services.
- Ensure regional and rural specialist domestic and family violence services are adequately funded.
- Increase the number of Aboriginal Controlled Organisations operating specialist domestic and family violence services.
- Fund a nation first, Women's Trauma Recovery Centre in the Illawarra to innovatively, safely and wholistic address high levels of violence. Please refer to the business case, research report and pre-budget submission provided separately by the Trauma Recovery Centre.

Outcomes

- Victim/survivors of domestic and family violence (including children) will have timely access to the effective, high-quality specialist support they need to be safe.
- Victim/survivors of domestic and family violence will have access to crisis support, safe housing, counselling, and case work support.
- **Reduced rates of death, disability, injury and illness due to domestic and family violence.**
- Invest now to avoid escalating costs in responding to domestic and family violence in the future.
- Ensure NSW can successfully deliver its state priorities under the next National Plan to Address Violence against Women and their Children.
- Ensure NSW can successfully deliver state commitments to Closing the Gap.
- **Ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and families, and protect them from the risk of harm, abuse and neglect.**

⁴ Specialist service should meet the minimum requirements of a quality domestic and family violence specialist service as outlined in the *Good Practice Guidelines for the Domestic and Family Violence Sector in NSW* developed by DVNSW.

Evidence of success

- Specialist services provide high quality services, as evidenced in the [DVNSW Good Practice Guidelines](#).
- Services have faced additional costs and demand due to COVID but have continued to deliver high quality outcomes for clients.⁵
- Investment in Victoria since the Royal Commission into Family Violence has seen a dramatic improvement in service delivery and availability of service to meet demand.⁶
- Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children delivered in partnership with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations is evidenced to provide quality results to community members.⁷

Statement of need

One in three women in Australia have experienced physical violence in their lifetime, one in six adult women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner, and one in four women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.⁸ The severity of injury is even higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women than non-Aboriginal women, with Aboriginal women aged 15 and over were 32 times more likely to be hospitalised for family violence as non-Indigenous females in 2016-17.⁹ The ongoing social, medical and supports required for victim-survivors of this violence is substantial, with demand outstripping supply for specialist services, resulting in devastating consequences. **Approximately one woman every week is murdered by a partner of former partner.**¹⁰ At least 50% of women who reported DFV disclosed having a child in their care.¹¹

The violent, threatening, abusive and/or intimidating behaviour of domestic and family violence has a range of serious consequences for families and communities. Domestic and family violence causes fear, physical and/or psychological harm. Children who are exposed to violence in the family context experience significant trauma and are at high risk of suffering psychological and emotional trauma.¹² However, this **trauma can be significantly reduced when appropriate supports and responses are put in place.**¹³

Domestic Violence NSW recommends that the NSW Government increase funding to services and organisations that meet the minimum requirements of a quality domestic and family violence specialist service (as outlined in the *Good Practice Guidelines for the Domestic and Family Violence Sector in NSW*) by 50% to ensure a sustainable, well-resourced sector that can

⁵ Equity Economics (2020). [A Wave of Disadvantage Across NSW](#).

⁶ Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (May 2021). [Fourth Report](#) as at 1 November 2020.

⁷ Cripps, K. and Habibis, D. (2019). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Improving housing and service responses to domestic and family violence for Indigenous individuals and families, doi:10.18408/ahuri-7116201, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/320>

⁸ Cox, P. (2016). *Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012* (ANROWS Horizons: 01.01/2016 Rev. ed.). Sydney: ANROWS.

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012); ANROWS (2015).

¹¹ Nielson, L., C. (2017). Responding to Domestic Violence in Family Law, Civil Protection & Child Protection Cases, 2nd ed, 2017

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hooker., L., Kaspiw., R. & Taft., A., (2016). Domestic and family violence and parenting: Mixed methods insights into impact and support needs: State of knowledge paper.

provide quality support for women and their children, and especially the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Victim-survivors of domestic and family violence need access to support services which increase safety and reduce deaths, disability and injury.

From financial year (FY) 2016-17 to FY 2020-21 The NSW Government announced an investment of \$300 million in specialist domestic violence initiatives which was extended to \$140 million over two years in the FY2019-20 state budget as well as an additional \$60 million over two years to fund the expansion of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program. The current funding covers services funded under Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), however additional funding increases are required for DFV specialist services funded under NSW Health and specialist legal services. Short term-COVID related funding has been delivered to some services, however this has been inadequate to address the funding required to address community need.

2. Fund domestic and family violence prevention

Funding Request

Commit \$150,000 to develop a NSW primary prevention strategy, including thorough consultation with stakeholders. Commitment to \$10 million per annum in subsequent years to address the drivers of sexual violence and family violence through coordinated state-wide activities, including respectful relationships initiatives delivered for children and young people.

Proposed initiatives

- Fund the development of a NSW Primary Prevention Strategy which aligns with the two National Prevention strategies developed by Our Watch; Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia and Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.¹⁴
- Fund the implementation of the primary prevention initiatives in the above plan.

Outcomes

- **A systemic approach to the prevention of family violence and violence against women** is established, driving evidence-informed primary prevention across NSW.
- **Violence is stopped before it begins**, preventing injury death and disability and reducing the trauma for 100s of 1000s of NSW residents.
- The NSW community is educated and active on how to change the culture of gendered violence to create safer communities for all.
- Policies, strategies and programs to prevent violence against women use the shared National understanding of the evidence and principles of effective prevention.
- **NSW is an international leader in the field of violence prevention.**
- NSW fulfills our commitments under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children.

Evidence of success

- Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.
- Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.
- NSW Health Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence 2021-2026.
- Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.¹⁵

¹⁴ Our Watch (2015, updated 2021). Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia; and Our Watch (2018). Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

¹⁵ State Government of Victoria (2007). Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.

- Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities.¹⁶

Statement of need

Research demonstrates that gendered violence is preventable and that with resourcing and community action we can create families and communities free from violence.¹⁷ Domestic and family violence is a symptom of wider gendered inequality, and efforts to eliminate this violence should be paired with primary prevention techniques that simultaneously foster gender equality.¹⁸ **An upfront investment in violence prevention through community education and early intervention programs can stop violence – and its associated costs of funding the police, the judiciary, child protection and community services – before it begins.**

Violence prevention initiatives require leadership and coordination of implementation, as well as the resourcing of local initiatives and marginalised groups to adapt violence prevention initiatives to their own context. The specialist domestic and family violence sector recognises the need to change the culture of gendered violence in NSW. The sector strongly supports the work of Our Watch in bringing together the international research, and nationwide experience, on what works to prevent violence against women and children.

Domestic Violence NSW recommends that the NSW Government fund the development of policies, strategies and programs to prevent violence against women in consultation with the specialist domestic and family violence sector in NSW and using the shared understanding of the evidence and principles of effective prevention outlined by Our Watch’s two national As a comparison, Victoria spent \$46.3 million in their 2021-22 budget on primary prevention initiatives. The suggested approach of developing a strategy and making an initial commitment of \$10 million per annum in NSW will allow NSW to address the underlying causes of violence in NSW, and to reduce the cost of violence to both the community and the economy.

¹⁶ Carman, M., Fairchild, J., Parsons, M., Farrugia, C., Power, J., Bourne, A., (2021). Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities. La Trobe.

¹⁷ Our Watch (2021). Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

¹⁸ Our Watch (2018). Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

3. Effectively invest in social housing and specialist homelessness services

Funding Request

- \$2.6 billion per year for the next 10 years to grow NSW social housing by 5,000 properties per year.
- An additional \$500 million to repair existing social housing stock.
- Increase funding to specialist homelessness services by a minimum of 20% or \$156 million over 3 years.
- Increase recurrent funding for existing Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations (ACCOs) by a minimum of \$10 million over 3 years and increase the number of ACCOs to meet the demand through a minimum investment of \$82 million.

Proposed initiatives

- **Build 5,000 additional units of social housing every year for the next 10 years.**
- Invest in **social housing for specific marginalised communities**, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Maintain current assets by investing to repair the current social housing stock.
- **Increase funding for the Specialist Homelessness Services Program by a minimum of 20%.**
- **Implement minimum standards and guidelines for meanwhile use accommodation** to ensure these properties are safe and fit for purpose, in-line with the existing ASES policy framework.
- Fund a medium term supported accommodation service for people without permanent residency, with employment and support services, including support that is youth-specific, and domestic and family violence specific

Outcomes

- Women and children experiencing domestic and family violence are less likely to experience homelessness.
- **More people experiencing homelessness can access crisis housing- with currently only one in two accessing in some areas.**
- Women and children experiencing homelessness will enter safe long-term housing sooner, allowing them to recover faster, reducing the health burden due to PTSD and related health issues.
- NSW is able to meet its targets under the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018–23, National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children and the Closing The Gap targets.

Research by Equity Economics has found that the provision of 16,810 social housing units would:

- **Deliver immediate economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and create 47,000 jobs across the economy.**
- Would avoid \$122.5 million in a year in costs due to women returning to a violent partner.
- Would avoid \$257 million in a year in costs due to women experiencing homelessness after leaving their homes due to family and domestic violence.¹⁹

Evidence of success

- Long-term housing initiatives are proven to be integral to supporting safe outcomes for victim/survivors of domestic and family violence.²⁰
- Social housing provides safe, stable and long-term safety to victim/survivors of DFV.²¹
- SHS deliver high quality responses to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable clients experiencing domestic and family violence,²² performing to quality assurance measures under Australian Service Excellence Standards.
- **Following significant investment through the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, there was a three per cent decrease in the total number of Victorian homelessness clients from 2017–18 to 2018–19 and a 10 per cent decrease in family violence clients following years of steady increases in these numbers.**²³
- Housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities delivered in partnership with Aboriginal Controlled Organisations is evidenced to provide quality results to community members.²⁴
- High return on investment, based on the 2021-22 NSW budget figures.

Statement of need

Domestic and family violence is the single largest driver of homelessness for women and children.²⁵ In NSW, crisis and transitional accommodation provided by Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) remains the principle response for people experiencing homelessness.²⁶ In 2018/19 SHS providers assisted 73,500 people in NSW. Significantly, domestic and family violence accounted for the largest cohort of people seeking assistance at 34%. 36% of all people assisted by the SHS were categorised as single parent families with children, illustrating the high number of children who experience homelessness. It's important to acknowledge that SHS data

¹⁹ Ibid, p.5.

²⁰ Flanagan, K., Blunden, H., Valentine, K., Henriette, J (2019). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Housing outcomes after domestic and family violence, DOI 10.18408/ahuri-4116101, https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0026/37619/AHURI-Final-Report-311-Housing-outcomes-after-domestic-and-family-violence.pdf

²¹ Equity Economics (2021). Nowhere to go: The benefits of providing long-term social housing to women that have experienced domestic and family violence, http://everybodyshome.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EE_Women-Housing_Domestic-Violence_WEB_SINGLES.pdf

²² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020–21.

²³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020–21.

²⁴ Cripps, K. and Habibis, D. (2019). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), Improving housing and service responses to domestic and family violence for Indigenous individuals and families, doi:10.18408/ahuri-7116201, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/320>

²⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019.

²⁶ Audit Office of NSW (2021). Responses to homelessness report, <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/responses-to-homelessness>

does not reflect the true homelessness numbers for women due to the hidden nature of women's homelessness, with victim-survivors often couch surfing or living in their car as they are unable to access services.

Based on pre-pandemic numbers, approximately 7,690 women a year are returning to perpetrators due to having no-where affordable to live.²⁷ Whilst SHS services are able to move women seeking assistance into temporary housing, very few move into stable, long-term, safe and appropriate accommodation. A lack of access to safe housing leads to a variety of negative outcomes, most pressingly, that victim/survivors return to abusive partners. Social housing investment also makes financial sense.

In July 2021, 64% of DVNSW member services reported an increase in demand since the COVID 19 pandemic.²⁸ The increased challenges to accessing housing due to the pandemic, and the price increases in regional and rural areas have been widely reported. SHS staff are essential workers who have been stretched due to the pandemic, and a funding increase to the sector is desperately needed in order to allow services to meet demand.

Secure, stable and long term social and affordable housing is critical to promote the safety, wellbeing and best possible outcomes for women and children. The provision of long term social and affordable housing is the most cost effective and sustainable response to reducing homelessness. In particular, social housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will help NSW to meet their targets under Closing the Gap. With the housing system at capacity, there is an urgent need to build more social and affordable housing in NSW.

²⁷ Equity Economics (2021). Nowhere to go: The benefits of providing long-term social housing to women that have experienced domestic and family violence, http://everybodyshome.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EE_Women-Housing_Domestic-Violence_WEB_SINGLES.pdf

²⁸ DVNSW (21 July 2021). Covid19 Briefing.

4. Fund a workforce development strategy for the specialist domestic and family violence sector

Funding Requirement

\$150,000 to develop a ten year workforce development strategy. \$1.2 million to support up to 80 new graduates to receive training and development in domestic and family violence. \$2 million annually to provide additional training and skill development opportunities to the current workforce. Support the Male Family Violence Intervention sector's workforce development through an investment of \$3.8 million.

Proposed initiatives

- Fund the development of a ten-year workforce strategy for the specialist domestic and family violence sector and men's behavioural change sector in NSW.
- Support and skill development for up to 80 new graduates to enter the specialist DFV workforce, gain employment and develop skills to work in a specialist field.
- Training for current specialist DFV and male family violence intervention sector services in trauma and gendered violence-informed practice, cultural safety and awareness, risk and compliance, violence prevention, health and wellbeing, in particular, countering the impact of vicarious trauma.

Outcomes

- Careful and considered, long-term workforce planning.
- **Increase employment in a predominantly female workforce.**
- Support and strengthen the workforce to provide high quality responses to DFV.
- **Reduction in workplace injuries** related to vicarious trauma.
- Workforce planning completed in 2022-23 to be able to staff the 75 additional refuges announced by the NSW Government in 2020, to be operational by 2024.
- **Addresses workforce shortages.**
- Addresses a rapidly ageing workforce.
- **Training opportunities for the regional and rural workforce.**
- **Increase the pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified workers across the sector.**

Evidence of success

- Successful workforce development undertaken through the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016-2022.²⁹
- Building Australia's Future Workforce, successful National workforce planning, 2011.

²⁹ Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (May 2021). [Fourth Report](#) as at 1 November 2020.

- Report by Equity Economics evidencing the success of workforce development initiatives.³⁰
- Additional jobs will be created, noting that already prior to the COVID19 pandemic, In the five years before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 8 jobs created in NSW was in the Social Sector.³¹

Statement of need

The NSW Social Sector provides essential care and support to over 1 million people each year – including those impacted by poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, mental health challenges, disability or other complex issues.³² In order for the NSW Government to meet national obligations to the Closing the Gap targets and National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children, additional services and workforce will be important and required. There has been an announced increase in DFV services including the 2021 NSW Government announcements to increase Staying Home Leaving Violence services and to invest in 75 new refuges across NSW. Research from Equity Economics suggests the social sector will demand an additional 62,000 jobs by 2030, including 27,000 in regional NSW.³³ **These additional services create a significant need for skilled specialist domestic and family violence workers. To ensure workers are ready to service clients on the opening of these refuges, immediate investment is required in building and retaining the specialist domestic and family violence workforce.**

The community services workforce remains strongly female dominated. Many workers are approaching retirement age, especially in small organisations, and the employment is characterised by high rates of part time and casual employment. Staff recruitment and retention is particularly challenging in regional and rural areas.³⁴ A 2017 report by UNSW on Workforce Issues in the Community Services Sector showed that:

- On average, 77.6% of their staff were women, with higher rates in the DFV sector.
- 1 in 4 workers in community service organisations were aged 55 or over, with an older cohort in the DFV sector where **approximately half of the staff will be of retirement age in the next 10 years.**
- Very small organisations reported higher proportions of older staff. In organisations with 5 or fewer staff, 1 in 3 workers were 55 or older, and very few staff were aged under 25.³⁵

While there have been some improvements in the training available to the specialist DFV sector, there needs to be a comprehensive workforce strategy and professional development

³⁰ Equity Economics (2021). The Social Sector in NSW: Capitalising on the potential for growth. <http://www.equityeconomics.com.au/socialsectorinnsw>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Social Policy Research Centre (2017). Workforce Issues in the NSW Community Services Sector rural and remote New South Wales, Australia, Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 39:1, 86-97.

³⁵ Cortis, N., & Blaxland, M. (2017). Workforce Issues in the NSW Community Services Sector (SPRC Report 07/17). Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

framework for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. This was recommended in an audit of DFV workforce training undertaken by the Education Centre Against Violence in 2010 and not yet addressed, and was also a recommendation in the Victorian context in the Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016. Effectively responding to DFV and men's violence is specialist work, which requires training and continual skill development. **The development of a state-based workforce development plan for these sectors must investigate current shortages and gaps** as well as identify areas where skill development is necessary including upskilling on new and developing areas such as non-fatal strangulation and technology-facilitated abuse.

5. Double funding for Domestic Violence NSW - the peak organisation for the specialist domestic and family violence sector

Funding Requirement

An additional \$1 million recurrent annually to represent and advocate for the staff and clients of over 130 specialist DFV services across NSW.

Proposed initiatives

- Double the NSW Government investment in the state's trusted representative peak body, Domestic Violence NSW.
- Deliver and support networks who deliver primary prevention of DFV initiatives which stop violence before it starts.
- **Resource the peak body to support services so they can better provide essential services to women at risk of death, disability and injury from domestic violence.**
- Provide information and support to NSW Government to address high levels of DFV.
- Increase supports for essential DFV workers which increase performance and staff retention and reduce vicarious trauma, such as training opportunities, cultural supervision, community of practice learning opportunities and resource libraries

Outcomes

- Adequate funding of DVNSW will ensure that the NSW Government receives the guidance and support it requires when investing in the specialist domestic and family violence sector.
- **Sustainable sector** through peak body coordination and support.
- Safe implementation and coordination of NSW Government initiatives by a trusted and informed peak body.
- **NSW is able to meet its commitments under the National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children.**
- **NSW is able to meet its commitments to Closing the Gap, in particular Closing the Gap Target 13.**

Evidence of success

- The [DVNSW Annual Reports](#) summarise the organisations' successes year upon year.
- DVNSW produced 23 submissions in FY 2020-21.
- DVNSW actively participates in over 70 interagency meetings, ensuring information is shared and NSW government have the information necessary to implement their DFV policy.
- 120% increase in membership base in FY 2020-21.

- Trained over 1000 people across DFV services, local councils, and community organisations on whole-of-community approaches to primary prevention of DFV.
- Presented webinars to over 500 workers across the DFV and migrant and refugee support sector on the impacts of COVID-19 and DFV.
- Meets regularly with NSW Government including on a Ministerial and Departmental level.
- Works closely with other organisations, including participation in over 70 consultation and policy advisory groups.
- Community of practice model utilised by DVNSW is successful in supporting staff and increasing learning and development.³⁶

Statement of need

Domestic Violence NSW is the peak organisation for the specialist domestic and family violence sector in NSW. DVNSW is currently funded approximately \$1 million to represent, support and advocate for the staff and clients of over 130 specialist DFV services across NSW. However, the base funding is made up of only \$580,000 with the supplementary made up of one-off grants and short-term projects which is not recurring. This funding translates to just over 6 full time employees. The peak's workforce has been additionally stretched since the COVID-19 pandemic, as the peak has provided additional engagement, support and information such as risk management advice to services, and has been called upon more frequently to support the NSW government to manage the 'shadow pandemic' of DFV. This has led to staff being spread thin and undertaking hours beyond their paid hours to meet need and demand. The departmental support provided by the peak is particularly complex and time intensive, as domestic and family violence covers a variety of areas including Department of Health, Education, Police, Communities and Justice which including housing, justice and women's portfolios.

The 120% increase in membership in FY2020-21 from 60 to over 130 members demonstrates the demand for the peak's service and the quality of work DVNSW is providing to its members.

In order to support the NSW delivery of commitments to the National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children, the Premier's priorities related to gendered violence and NSW's commitments to Closing the Gap, DVNSW requires this additional resourcing. The peak for example, does not have a primary prevention officer or an Aboriginal focussed worker, although these focus areas are essential to reduce gendered violence.

In comparison, Domestic Violence Victoria (now rebranded as Safe And Equal) were funded \$2,473,476 in FY2020-21 to represent 85 organisations which is lower in comparison.³⁷ NSW also has a larger number of victim/survivors of domestic and family violence and a much larger geographical region. With the additional resources Safe and Equal were able to provide a suite of training options to the sector to improve practice and ensure evidence based service delivery. Safe and Equal have played an important and influential part in translating government DFV policy to practice and providing support for the governance of the state's federal commitments to address the issue.

³⁶ Anderson-Carpenter, K., Watson-Thompson, Marvia J., Jones, M. and Chaney, L. (2014). Using Communities of Practice to Support Implementation of Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies, *Journal of Community Practice*, 22:1-2, 176-188.

³⁷ Safe and Equal (2021). Domestic Violence Victoria Annual Report, 2020-21, https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/DVV-DVRCV_Annual-Report_2020_2021-new-compressed_1.pdf

Trade Offs

The recommendations made in the DVNSW submission offer thorough **policy initiatives which if funded, will ultimately reduce the cost and health burden of domestic and family violence (DFV)** to the NSW community and economy. Investing in the five initiatives in this submission including primary prevention initiatives, coordination through the peak body and adequately funded support services will not only reduce death, disability and illness due to DFV, but will ultimately reduce the cost to the economy through providing high quality care in the first instance which is less costly than numerous lower quality responses, and through stopping the violence before it even starts through investing in preventing DFV.

Additionally, social housing provided high return on investment in the 2020-21 budget, indicating that this investment is sound both socially and financially. DVNSW suggest that profits made from this income stream are redirected to the recommendations on housing made in this submission.

Additional trade-offs suggested are:

- Reduced spending on roads and infrastructure or delaying projects to focus on health and wellbeing of NSW residents.
- Reduced spending on upgrading racing clubs.
- Reduced spending on Sydney CBD initiatives, such as Friday night Dine vouchers for the CBD.
- Reduced spending on fast-tracking developments.
- Reduced investment in gambling, racing and gaming.

With many of the above initiatives costing the NSW Government billions of dollars, substantial savings can be made to focus on the safety of NSW residents, and to prevent death, disability and injury of the high number of adults and children experiencing domestic and family violence in NSW.

Domestic Violence NSW

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Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) is the **peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW**. We have over 125 member organisations across NSW.

Our members represent the diversity of specialist services working in NSW to support women, families and communities impacted by domestic and family violence. Our member organisations include crisis and refuge services, transitional accommodation and community housing providers, family support services, Aboriginal controlled organisations and specialist CALD organisations, specialist homelessness service providers, men's behaviour change programs and networks, community organisations working with high-risk communities, specialist women's legal support services, women and children's support services, and Safe at Home programs.

Acknowledgement

This report was written on the unceded lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation and the Dharawal people. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging. DVNSW would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the breadth and depth of Australia. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived and cared for Country for over 65,000 years and continue to do so, honouring ancestors and knowledge holders within community, and observing ancient cultural practices.