Domestic Violence NSW

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SAFETY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NSW
2027-28 NSW PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

Strong foundations keep women and children safe.

When women leave domestic and family violence, they need immediate access to safe accommodation and specialist support. Women's refuges and the specialist domestic and family violence workforce provide that foundation. Investment in both is essential to ensure women and children can escape violence safely and rebuild their lives.

Women and children in NSW continue to experience domestic and family violence at alarming rates.

Every month, an average of 2,450 domestic violence assaults are reported to NSW Police, 80 women and children are admitted to hospital with serious injuries, and two people are killed in domestic and family violence homicides[1].

The true scale of harm is even greater, with an estimated 82% of women who experience domestic and family violence never contacting police[2].

Domestic and family violence remains the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. In 2024-25 more than 12,000 women sought help from Specialist Homelessness Services due to domestic and family violence[3].

Women and children face the greatest danger when they try to leave and in the months after separation.

Timely access to crisis accommodation and specialist support at this point can prevent further harm and loss of life.

Our 2027–28 Pre-Budget Submission has been informed by evidence, research and extensive consultations with our members across the specialist domestic and family violence sector.

Investing in our recommendations would strengthen the capacity, quality and sustainability of NSW's specialist domestic and family violence response and help deliver safer, more sustainable outcomes for women and children.

On behalf of our approximately 200 member organisations, and the thousands of victim-survivors they support, we call on the NSW government to strengthen the foundations of safety through investment in two connected priorities: women's refuges and the specialist domestic and family violence workforce.

Recommendation 1: Increase core operational funding for women's refuges by 50% ($61 million)

We welcome the NSW Government's investment in increased core funding across the specialist DFV sector. However, women's refuges have been excluded from this uplift because they are classified within the homelessness system, despite being foundational to the specialist DFV crisis response.

Refuges have received no meaningful increase in core funding for more than a decade, despite a:

- 70% increase in women seeking DFV support
- 90% increase in women needing accommodation due to domestic violence
- 41% increase in operating costs from inflation alone[3]

The consequences are felt across the entire system. As investment in other frontline DFV services increases, more women and children will be referred to refuges, placing further pressure on already overstretched services.

Our members, representing more than a third of the SHS-funded refuge sector, are supporting 50% more women and children than they are funded for, while two in three people seeking safety are turned away.

A 50% increase in core operational funding is essential to ensure refuges have the workforce and resources to provide safety when women and children need it most.

Recommendation 2: Invest $3.99 million in Phase 1 of the Quality Practice Standards implementation

The Quality Practice Standards (the Standards) are a significant, sector-led investment in strengthening the quality and consistency of specialist DFV practice.

Developed over three years with input from 88 services and 499 participants, they provide a shared framework for quality practice across the sector.

However, without dedicated implementation funding, their potential to strengthen practice and improve outcomes will remain unrealised.

Investment in Phase 1 would enable DVNSW to establish a centralised digital resource hub, bringing together standards-aligned training, practical implementation tools, educational resources and specialised guidance, supported by monitoring and evaluation.

Member feedback throughout the development of the Standards and subsequent consultations has consistently reinforced the importance of implementation remaining sector-led and coordinated by DVNSW as the Peak Body.

This investment will establish the infrastructure, resources and support mechanisms required for sector-wide implementation of the Standards, including governance arrangements, implementation guidance, training, communities of practice, evaluation and ongoing refinement.

Investing in these asks will strengthen the capacity and quality of the specialist DFV response, ensuring women and children can access safe, skilled and consistent support, wherever they live in NSW.

1. BOCSAR, 2026
2. ABS, 2023
3. AIHW, 2024