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## Extra support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

The ACT Labor Government will increase support for women who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault by providing \$1.266 million in new funding in the 2010-11 ACT Budget for crisis services.

ACT Minister for Women, Joy Burch, said \$1.266 million would be provided over four years to assist the work of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre which provide an immediate crisis response.

Ms Burch said this Budget initiative met an ACT Government election commitment to further support and protect victims of crime, especially those who were the victims of the most invasive crimes — sexual assault and family violence offences.

“These services form part of a continuum of support from police intervention, through to counselling, accommodation and court advocacy,” Ms Burch said.

The Budget also provides funding for an innovative early intervention program for young people using violence against family members.

“The program will be provided by the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and will challenge the use of violence by providing the intensive intervention needed for young people to break their own cycle of violence.”

Ms Burch said the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre were vital front line crisis response services, and both had had to respond to recent increases in demand.

“The Budget addresses immediate demand pressures for these critical services supporting women and children experiencing violence,” the Minister said.

In addition, Commonwealth funds received through the National Affordable Housing Agreement signed in 2009 will provide for two new court advocacy workers in the community sector in early 2010-11. These positions will alleviate the strain on support and representation services at the courts for women who are the victims of sexual assault or domestic violence.

Ms Burch said the successful implementation of the Government’s Sexual Assault Reform Program (SARP) had led to increased victim confidence in justice and support responses.

For the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre this has resulted in a 200 per cent increase in crisis callouts in three years. This Budget initiative will provide an additional first response SARP worker.

“We know that the level of sexual assault and family violence against women is significantly under-reported. However, the Government’s coordinated Family Violence Intervention Program and Sexual Assault Reform Program have provided increased confidence to women victims of violence in the justice response.”

Ms Burch said the initiatives meet key priorities of the ACT Women’s Plan: that the ACT provides strategies to break the cycle of violence against women and their children and to instil an anti-violence message.

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