

BUDGET 2016-17



SAFER FAMILIES STATEMENT

Increasing numbers of people are reporting family violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault. The effects 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. What we know about family violence nationally is that:

- > 44.8 per cent or close to half of all Australians have experienced violence since the age of 15;
- > One third of women have experienced violence by someone who is known to them;
- > One in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15;
- > One in four Australian women have experienced emotional abuse by a partner 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.

SAFER FAMILIES

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. It builds on the work already done, and includes:

- > 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.
- > Strengthening 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).
- > 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.

This 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. These reforms build on key measures the ACT Government has undertaken to address domestic violence and sexual assault over recent years. Since 2014, we have introduced a number of new initiatives:

- > Established the position of Coordinator-General for Domestic and Family Violence in the ACT.
- > Reformed the victims of crime assistance scheme to make it easier and faster to get financial help and counselling services.
- > Progressed key amendments to create a new offence of strangulation, to allow police interviews of complainants in family violence cases to be used as evidence in criminal trials and to improve victim protections in DVO proceedings where criminal matters are ongoing.
- > Established the Crisis Services Scheme for women with disability.
- > Supported detainee participation in rehabilitative programs at the Alexander Maconochie Centre to assist with reintegration into the community.
- > Continued to support women's safety grants, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the development of an ACT domestic violence data framework.
- > Return to Work Grants which have assisted more than 900 women, approximately half of whom have experienced domestic violence.
- > Provided **\$615,000** funding for Social and Emotional Learning programs in schools in 2015 and 2016. This funding amounts to \$2,500 per school per year and is part of the Government's early intervention and prevention approach to address family and domestic violence by enhancing the skills of children and young people to engage in respectful relationships.
- > 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 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