

Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

The ACT Government is committed to addressing domestic, family and sexual violence through prevention activities and better responses for victim survivors. We recognise this violence as a violation of human rights and acknowledge the impact it has on the lives of those affected. Instances of domestic, family and sexual violence directly impact the health, wellbeing and development of individuals, families and communities.

The 2022-23 Budget provides **\$71.6 million over 4 years across a broad range of measures to address issues relating to domestic, family and sexual violence**. This includes \$24 million in new funding.

Preventing domestic, family and sexual violence is a collective responsibility shared across our community. The total funding for initiatives under the Safer Families Levy over four years is \$41.3 million. The Levy supports us to deliver on this substantial package of work and to continue vital responses to the community over the coming four years.

The Safer Families Levy was originally introduced on 1 July 2016 to provide community support and to raise awareness of domestic violence in the ACT community. From 2021-22, the ACT Government increased the Safer Families Levy by \$5 per year over four years, taking the Levy to \$50 per household in 2024-25. The increases in

the Levy allow us to enhance our responses to domestic, family and sexual violence, continuing to fund critical frontline service delivery and enabling the community to contribute in a tangible way. The levy is expected to raise around \$30 million over four years.

The Budget provides significant funding to further focus on sexual assault prevention and response following the *Listen. Take Action to Prevent, Believe and Heal Report* delivered by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee in December 2021 and the ACT Government response delivered in June 2022. The Report made wide-ranging recommendations relating to prevention, response and law reform. The budget measures respond to a foundational set of recommendations and include funding for new ways of working across government and community to focus on prevention, reduce barriers to access, join up and integrate services, and respond to diverse needs.

Strengthening Services and Action in response to Domestic and Family Violence

Domestic and family violence will never be tolerated in our community. The 2022-23 Budget provides funding to continue to deliver on key initiatives as well as establish new responses to assist people experiencing domestic and family violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on domestic and family violence services in the ACT. The increasing demand for frontline domestic and family violence services is a key focus of the ACT Government. This is balanced with looking to evidence-based initiatives that will provide solutions for prevention and earlier support.

In 2021-22 the *Family Violence Safety Action Pilot* provided intensive case management, coordination and information sharing to support individuals and families at the highest possible risk of loss of life from domestic and family violence incidents. As part of the 2022-23 Budget, we have committed **\$5.9 million** over 3 years to **transition the Family Violence Safety Action Pilot into an expanded Program**. The additional funding for the Program will enhance capacity and provide a greater focus on coordination to meet the needs of families at the highest levels of risk.

Ensuring we provide culturally appropriate services is a high priority for the ACT Government. The community-led family violence responses for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community initiative builds on recent government actions in this area, such as progressing the recommendations in the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* report. This **\$1.9 million** initiative will see government work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over 4 years to **scope, design and implement culturally appropriate and relevant responses to domestic and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**.

The 2022-23 Budget provides **\$1.8 million to build and maintain the skills and knowledge in services to deliver best practice responses to victims of domestic and family violence**.

This funding demonstrates a commitment to investing in the workforce who are on the frontline responding to victim survivors of violence. The ACT Government will deliver this commitment through engagement, training, and resource development.

The 2022-23 Budget provides funding to support sustained demand for frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services including to Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and resourcing to increase the capacity of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to meet the demand for emergency accommodation to protect victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

We are continuing funding to the successful Health Justice Partnerships, a service supporting pregnant women and new families at risk of domestic and family violence with safe and confidential legal support in hospital or healthcare settings.

In 2022 the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Coordinator will oversee the collection of case data and information from ACT Government agencies to commence a historic review of domestic violence deaths to look at domestic and family violence deaths or incidents of serious harm, to understand how they happened and to identify system-level improvements. This can help to reduce the likelihood of such events in the future.

The ACT Government continues to look beyond frontline service capacity to see where there are opportunities for efficiency and legislative improvements to provide longer-term solutions:

- > Progressing legislative reforms to establish a domestic and family violence information sharing scheme in the ACT.
- > Identifying opportunities to further incorporate the expertise of people with lived experience of domestic and family violence into policy and program designs.
- > Reviewing and enhancing the governance across the domestic violence services sector through the refreshed Domestic Violence Prevention Council.
- > Rollout of the ACT Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework as well as ongoing work to build and develop common tools and practices.
- > Continued work with the Commonwealth and our State and Territory partners to develop the next National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children, making Australia safer for all.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual violence is a serious issue that has long lasting physical and mental health impacts and requires a concerted response and commitment from all of us. Reflecting the high priority of this issue, the ACT Government has made considerable commitments in the 2022-23 Budget.

In December 2021 the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee released their final report titled *Listen. Take Action to Prevent, Believe and Heal*. The Report was the culmination of in-depth consultation with community members, people with lived experience of sexual violence, non-government organisations and government agencies. The Report and its recommendations were developed by the Steering Committee and three working groups focused on prevention, response, and law reform.

As part of the 2022-23 Budget, the ACT Government has committed funding to respond to a foundational set of recommendations from this report:

- > **\$4.37 million** over 4 years to **establish a Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC)**. The MDC will collocate specialist sexual violence response services in one place to improve ease of access for victim survivors. It will be an efficient, fit-for-purpose contact point that will reduce the impact response and reporting can have on a victim survivors. This funding also supports the recruitment of a broad range of specialist roles within the MDC to ensure we can address every possible need with world-class support.
- > **\$1.4 million** over 4 years for an **ongoing structured consultation program with victim survivors of sexual assault** to continue to drive reforms to the prevention of and response to sexual violence informed by lived experience.
- > **\$1.5 million** over 4 years to **establish Independent Sexual Violence Advisors in the ACT to provide on-the-ground expert advocacy, system navigation and linkages to services and supports** for victim survivors of sexual violence.
- > Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to **ensure culturally informed implementation** of the recommendations in the *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Report*.
- > Development of a **long-term Prevention Strategy** to change the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate sexual violence and implement tailored actions to reduce the risk and occurrence of sexual violence in all settings where ACT residents live, work and play.
- > A **Specialist Services Review** of agencies and statutory bodies providing services related to sexual violence to identify where further investment and changes need to be made to address victim survivors' needs, operating practices, performance measures and standards, coordination systems and current funding arrangements.
- > A one-off **research grant to undertake analysis to inform models of care** in sexual assault forensic medicine in the ACT.