



Media release 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019

The Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA), the Women's Community Health Network WA and Stopping Family Violence have serious concerns about the Liberal National Government providing \$2.3 million for a pilot program in 10 regional centres in Western Australia. While we welcome the much needed investment in regional Western Australia to promote women's and children's safety, we are not satisfied that a rigorous process was adhered to.

To ensure that women have access to evidence-based, high quality services and programs it is essential that the relevant state and local specialist domestic and family violence services sectors meaningfully contribute to the co-design of grant opportunities (and other programs) with the Commonwealth Government before they are released.

The specialist skills, knowledge and practice of domestic and family violence work has developed over many years in response to evidence-based practice and emerging theoretical models within a framework of core principles around women's safety and perpetrator accountability. Understanding the nature and dynamics of domestic and family violence and the lived experience of the women and children who suffer it is the underpinning of effective responses. This knowledge informs the specialist practice of domestic and family violence workers, as well as the variety of abusive behaviours that constitute domestic and family violence – physical, psychological, emotional, financial and sexual abuse. Importantly it provides a gendered analysis of the impact of overt and coercive power and control within abusive relationships.

Importantly, family and domestic violence services throughout Western Australia hold specialist expertise about the responses needed at a local level and these services are key mechanisms through which service provision and integration are channelled. These services are local experts and many are already engaged in the provision of high quality supports such as those listed in the announcement. While capacity remains a significant concern for services in regional Western Australia the Liberal National announcement undermines the value of locally led and placed based support that draws upon the sectors knowledge and expertise.

Angela Hartwig, CEO of the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services, says “The specialist domestic and family violence sector in Western Australia is keen to share their knowledge and experience with the Commonwealth Government to ensure that much needed – and much welcomed – funding for Western Australia is awarded to services and programs that have been co-designed, or at least developed in close consultation, with specialist domestic and family violence services and priority population groups.”

It is essential that the Commonwealth Government explicitly set, and adhere to, standards for service provision. These standards must be consistent with the frameworks already developed through decades of specialist work in the non-government and government sectors, including the [National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children](#) and research by [ANROWS](#). International guidelines including the [UN Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence](#) are also now in place. In the important and highly complex area of domestic and family violence, where the safety of



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women and children is paramount, it is essential that governments only fund programs and services that demonstrate alignment to these standards in their practice. According to Damian Green, CEO of

Stopping Family Violence, “codesign is critical to this imperative and as such any new initiatives funded by the Commonwealth must be developed in partnership with state and local organisations impacted by these decisions. The best interests of women and children impacted by family and domestic violence are best served by all levels of government and community working together to address this issue using our combined knowledge and expertise and sadly this announcement does not demonstrate that principle.”

Alison Evans, Executive Officer of the Women's Community Health Network WA states: “Domestic and family violence is Western Australia's biggest law and order, social, health and human rights issue and will only end when we all work effectively together to address it through a rigorous application of the current evidence-base and principles of best practice.”

The need for increased funding and support for family and domestic violence services in western Australia is evident across a wide range of indicators. Western Australia is second only to the Northern Territory in terms of rates of family and domestic violence and the challenges of regional service delivery are known to many. This is a significant challenge to overcome and we feel strongly that addressing this issue in a meaningful way requires a considered process that takes in to account unintended consequences and the diversity of needs across the whole state. Funding another service, without meaningful integration and engagement with the existing services, creates further siloing in an area where the evidence suggests integration is key to success. Finally, as a relatively new and unproven initiative, the need, value and safety of the proposed funding over other priorities in Western Australia must include local expertise in determining the need for, and suitability of, any new pilot program.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light beige background, appearing to read 'A Hartwig'.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Green'.

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**STOPPING**  
FAMILY VIOLENCE

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