

Domestic and family violence initiatives and funding across Australian jurisdictions in 2016–17: a quick guide

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This quick guide provides a summary of recent funding commitments by state and territory governments to address domestic and family violence. It provides context for these commitments by giving an overview of the national framework for reform to which all jurisdictions have subscribed.

Terms used in this quick guide

Terminology in this policy area varies across jurisdictions. The terms **domestic violence** and **family violence** are interchangeable in the context of comparing the government funding packages that this quick guide covers. This guide follows terms employed by each jurisdiction in their respective funding announcements and policy documentation. There is, however, a meaningful distinction between the terms in the context of the intergovernmental framework (discussed in the ‘Overview’ below) and in the research literature. See the Parliamentary Library research paper [Domestic Violence: Issues and Policy Challenges](#) for further detail on related issues, policy challenges and relevant terminology.

Overview

Domestic and family violence prevention receives funding from Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The Commonwealth is responsible for the overarching national policies designed to reduce violence, and the states and territories are responsible for the front line services and law enforcement responses.

State and territory governments develop policy with input from independent reviews and inquiries into the recurrent incidence of [domestic and family violence and sexual assault](#) in the community. In its [2009 report](#), the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children argued that most attempts by Australian governments to address this form of violence have ‘struggled with the complexity and embedded nature of the problem’. Since the release of the National Council report, there has been a concerted effort to bring policy and funding across jurisdictions into a cohesive national framework.

The National Plan: an intergovernmental framework for action

In 2011, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children 2010–2022](#) (National Plan)—the current framework to connect the efforts of all Australian governments dealing with issues around domestic and family violence.

The [National Plan](#) ‘is the first plan to address domestic and family violence and sexual assault that:

- coordinates actions across jurisdictions,
- focuses strongly on stopping violence from happening in the first place through primary prevention,
- looks to the long term through building respectful relationships and working to increase gender equality to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, and

- focuses on holding perpetrators accountable and encouraging their behavioural change.

The National Plan is based on the idea that linking the actions of governments, community organisations and individuals is critical to reducing incidence and preventing occurrence. It provides a mutual framework for governments to form a [series of action plans over a twelve-year period](#). All Australian governments have identified six [outcomes to deliver through the action plans](#), thereby ensuring:

- communities are safe and free from violence
- relationships are respectful
- Indigenous communities are strengthened
- services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence
- justice responses are effective and
- perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

The [First Action Plan](#) under the National Plan stated the intent that ‘... [each] Action Plan will be tailored to meet priorities but will also allow sufficient flexibility for jurisdictions to develop and implement the programs they consider will work best’.

How the National Plan relates to funding

The [Commonwealth Government](#) funds overarching programs designed to reduce domestic violence—for example, the Government’s [national awareness campaign, Stop it at the Start](#), that commenced in April 2016. The Commonwealth also sponsors state and territory governments through [national initiatives](#), to which state and territory governments also make contributions.

[State and territory governments](#) have primary responsibility for providing services to those seeking assistance and to law enforcement in relation to policing and prosecuting instances of domestic violence. Programs and services are funded and administered by their respective health, community and human services departments alongside law enforcement and other agencies.

Detailed information on what Australian governments have funded under the National Plan framework to 2015 is available in the [2014–15 annual report for the Second Action Plan](#).

The [Third Action Plan](#) is on the COAG agenda for the 2016 calendar year. Governments at federal, state and territory levels have meanwhile made some significant funding commitments in their 2016–17 budgets.

State and territory budget funding commitments

The funding commitments selected for this guide highlight relevant initiatives and measures by jurisdiction, with a focus on changes introduced or commencing in the 2016–17 financial year.

The following sections outline state and territory commitments in the chronological order their budgets were delivered.

Victoria

The Victorian Government provided funding for [a family violence package of \\$572 million](#) in its [Budget on 27 April 2016](#). The funding allocations were intended to address recommendations tabled by the Victorian [Royal Commission into Family Violence](#) in March 2016. The package represents a significant increase in funding to those areas over an initial two-year period.

The [Victorian Government’s response to the Royal Commission’s](#) report includes the formation of several [governance bodies](#) so that stakeholder input feeds directly into the agenda for implementing the Commission’s 227 recommendations. The governance bodies are as follows:

- a [Family Violence Steering Committee](#) to guide prioritisation through early implementation
- a Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group to align the family violence reforms with the [Roadmap for Reform](#) project, focusing on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families
- a [Victim Survivors’ Advisory Council](#) to ‘provide a consistent mechanism for ongoing engagement and play an integral part in the design of new services and systems’ and

- a [Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce](#) to address the particular needs of individuals and children fleeing family violence.

Western Australia

Unlike other jurisdictions, no announcements for new funding measures specifically addressing [domestic violence](#) accompanied the Western Australian (WA) government Budget for 2016–17, [released on 12 May 2016](#).

The WA Government released its framework for addressing family and domestic violence, [Freedom from Fear](#), in September 2015. Also published in 2015 was [an action plan specific to the Kimberley region](#), which provides a framework for responding to Aboriginal family violence. The State Parliament also formally received [an independent review](#) of fatalities arising from family and domestic violence and issues associated with restraining orders.

The [Department for Child Protection and Family Support annual report for 2015–16](#) provides the most recent, publicly available overview of the funding behind WA initiatives in the area of family and domestic violence.

Among funding for existing measures administered by various WA agencies, the WA Attorney-General's Department administers a grants program for crime prevention and support initiatives, funded from criminal property confiscation. Some [grants from the most recent round of funding](#) were awarded to groups providing legal support to victims of family violence.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government [announced a \\$330,000 commitment](#) over three years when it delivered its [Budget on 26 May 2016](#). The purpose of the funding is 'to improve the quality and accessibility of culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence'. This commitment will supplement the state's \$26 million [Safe Homes, Safe Families](#) Family Violence Action Plan that commenced in August 2015.

Almost a third of the funding from the broader package released in 2015–16 has gone into setting up the [Safe Families Tasmanian Coordination Unit](#), which [began taking referrals](#) on 27 June 2016, and [Safe Choices](#)—an early intervention and prevention support service.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory (NT) Government delivered its [Budget on 24 May 2016](#), announcing \$6.8 million to support existing [domestic violence reduction and prevention initiatives](#) as part of the [Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy](#).

The [2016–17 NT Budget](#) contained a further \$600,000 over four years to fund [Indigenous Male Advisory Council recommendations](#) on family violence prevention initiatives. A sum of \$100,000 will fund minor upgrades to the [Alice Springs Women's Shelter](#) while the NT Government formulates a plan for new crisis accommodation. During the NT election campaign that followed these budget announcements, [Labor's then Deputy Opposition Leader pledged \\$6 million](#) to replace the existing shelter with a new facility.

Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) 2016–17 Budget, delivered on [6 June 2016](#), included a \$21.4 million domestic violence package known as [Safer Families](#). This package [targets a number of areas](#), with an overall objective to 'drive the next phase of reform in whole of government, community-backed responses to family violence'. It introduces [new aspects to service integration and coordination in the ACT](#) in a [formal response to three commissioned reports](#) on family violence in the Territory.

A [\\$30 annual levy](#) will hypothecate funds for the majority of the Safer Families package, applicable to all ACT households. This means of raising revenue to address domestic and family violence is [a first in any Australian state or territory](#).

The [Confiscated Assets Trust Fund](#) will supplement the levied funds, allowing forfeited proceeds of crime to go towards priority criminal justice initiatives and support organisations committed to reducing domestic violence. A large component of this funding will be [directed towards the ACT Justice Reinvestment trial](#), which 'targets services and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to improve life outcomes and reduce or prevent contact with the justice system'.

Queensland

The Queensland Government Budget, delivered on [14 June 2016](#), announced [\\$198.2 million over five years](#) to implement the Government's response to the [Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland](#) report. This amount includes \$192.9 million in new funding over four years and \$5.3 million in reprioritised funding from the state's 2015–16 Budget. Major components of the overall package include:

- specialist domestic and family violence courts (\$42.4 million)
- additional or enhanced victim support services (\$43.1 million) and
- eight specialist integrated-response teams (\$26.3 million).

Smaller aspects of the package will fund:

- additional perpetrator interventions to help protect victims (\$10.3 million)
- a communication and engagement program to change attitudes and behaviours (\$9.6 million) and
- two new shelters to support women and children escaping domestic and family violence (\$8.7 million).

New South Wales

The New South Wales (NSW) Government released its state Budget on [21 June 2016](#). The Budget contained [\\$300 million over four years](#) for domestic and family violence initiatives. This package is part of the NSW Government's [It Stops Here](#) framework for reform and its [Domestic Violence Justice Strategy](#). It includes funding to:

- expand [Safer Pathway](#), a coordinated multi-agency response for victims, by commencing 19 new sites in 2016–17, subject to the evaluation of pilot sites (the program is currently operating in six sites) (\$53 million)
- further develop the [Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Program](#) and meet unmet demand to respond to police referrals (amounting to \$40.3 million)
- build on [previously announced funding](#) that targets high-risk offender teams in the Northern and Central Metropolitan police regions, rolling out to all six police regions in the state over four years and deploying Domestic Violence Liaison Officers to aid investigations (\$25 million) and
- develop a [Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund](#) 'for prevention, early intervention and crisis responses that support the efforts of specialist domestic and family violence services and refuges' (\$20 million).

The [Start Safely program received \\$100 million in overall funding](#) to subsidise private rental costs so that family members leaving domestic violence have access to safe and stable accommodation. The Commonwealth Government had [announced funding](#) for this program under the [National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness](#) in October 2015.

South Australia

The South Australian (SA) Government delivered its Budget on [7 July 2016](#). The Budget contained two new domestic violence measures, specifically:

- [to introduce a national system](#) for South Australia Police to share information on domestic violence orders within and across jurisdictions as part of the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme (\$1.3 million) and
- [to expand the multi-agency protection service \(MAPS\)](#), funding two non-government staff co-located with MAPS, enhancing links between government agencies and domestic violence services that women may have accessed prior to engaging with police (\$683,000 over four years).

South Australia's broader policy responses are set out in [Taking a Stand: Responding to Domestic Violence](#), and in the state's [Family Safety Framework](#), which has been in place since 2013.

Australian Government funding commitments in 2016

For summary information on Commonwealth Government funding commitments towards domestic and family violence, see the [Parliamentary Library's Budget Review 2016–17](#).

While there have been updates to Commonwealth funding announcements since the 2016–17 federal Budget, this quick guide focuses on state and territory funding commitments that respective governments handed down in their 2016–17 budgets.

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