**DV Vic response to Federal Budget 2020-2021**

Like many others in the family violence and community services sector, DV Vic is disappointed that the Federal Government has not done more in the latest budget to support vulnerable members of our community who have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, including victim-survivors of family violence.

Working from home, school closures, limited access to child care, and social restrictions have given perpetrators unprecedented control over the lives of victim-survivors at the same time that many social supports, such as access to friends and family, have been removed. As a result, we know that many people, particularly women and children, women on temporary visas, and LGBTIQ people, are living with increased frequency and severity of family violence, including increased coercion, emotional manipulation, surveillance, and monitoring of electronic and communication devices from their perpetrators during COVID-19. At the same time that family violence is increasing, specialist family violence services are adjusting to the challenge of delivering services remotely, with many in the family violence workforce, the majority of whom are women, needing to manage increased caring and home-schooling responsibilities in addition to navigating the complexities of responding to heightened family violence risk remotely.

The most recent statistics from the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency reveals that family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police are up 6.7 per cent since last year.[[1]](#footnote-1) Anecdotally, from reports from our members, we know that requests for support from specialist family violence services are also increasing, not only from people experiencing family violence directly, but from family and friends concerned about loved ones who are unable to reach out for help on their own. We expect requests for support to increase as COVID-19 restrictions ease.

Unfortunately, despite extensive advocacy and media highlighting the increase in family violence due to COVID-19 and the need for more resources to invested into the specialist family violence sector to respond to demand and support the specialist family violence workforce, this budget offers no additional funding for specialist family violence services. DV Vic and our partners feel this is a missed opportunity for the Federal Government to invest in the safety of victim-survivors of family violence.

Numerous advocacy organisations have criticised the Federal Government for its paltry investment (less than 1% of the total budget)[[2]](#footnote-2) in the wellbeing of women, who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. DV Vic shares these views. Furthermore, where the Federal Government has invested in women, these investments do nothing to specifically help victim-survivors of family violence, the majority of whom are women and children.

Victim-survivors of family violence are more at risk of homelessness, more likely to be dependent on income support payments, more likely to be single parents, and less likely to be in full time employment or education because of the violence they have experienced. In addition to increasing funding for specialist family violence services, the initiatives that would have helped victim-survivors are:

* increased investment in crisis and social housing,
* permanently raising Job Seeker and other income support payments,
* reducing the cost of childcare, and
* investing in and raising the wages for industries which are dominated by women, in which victim-survivors are more likely to work, such as health, education, childcare, the community services sector and aged care.

Unfortunately, this budget made no significant investment in any of these areas. In some cases, victim-survivors have been actively disadvantaged, such as women on temporary visas experiencing family violence, who will now have to pass an [English test before they can access visa support](https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/australians-to-undergo-domestic-violence-check-to-sponsor-overseas-partner-20201013-p564gr.html).

We recognise that the Federal and Victorian Government have spent a significant amount of money to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and that this expenditure has left governments on all levels in deficit. However, a deficit and economic recession as a result of a global emergency is not the time to stop investing in or reduce funding to community support services, particularly family violence services. DV Vic will continue to work with our partner to lobby the Federal and State Governments to invest in programs and services that will achieve positive outcomes for victim-survivors of family violence.

For more coverage of the Federal Budget 2020-21 and its impact on victim-survivors of family violence and women we suggest:

[Budget fails women trying to escape violence](https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/budget-fails-women-trying-to-escape-violence/)

[That women are the losers in \*this\* history-making big-spending budget is shameful](https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/that-women-are-the-losers-in-this-history-making-big-spending-budget-is-shameful/)

[Federal budget 2020: A funding fail for women on all fronts](https://lens.monash.edu/%40politics-society/2020/10/08/1381494/federal-budget-2020-a-funding-fail-for-women-on-all-fronts)

[Politics with Michelle Grattan: economist Danielle Wood on Australia’s ‘blokey’ budget](https://theconversation.com/politics-with-michelle-grattan-economist-danielle-wood-on-australias-blokey-budget-148173)

1. Record family violence offences and COVID fines drive crime rate surge (24 Sept 2020) The Age: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/record-family-violence-offences-and-covid-fines-drive-crime-rate-surge-20200924-p55yqz.html> (accessed 13 Oct 2020) derived from Victoria Crime Stats <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-victorian-crime-data/family-incidents> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Women’s Agenda (7 Oct 2020) That women are the losers in \*this\* history-making big-spending budget is shameful. <https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/that-women-are-the-losers-in-this-history-making-big-spending-budget-is-shameful/> (Accessed 13/10/2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)