

June 29, 2021

We save lives, but where's our lifeline?

Central Victoria's leading specialist family violence response agency, Centre for Non-Violence, is joining state-wide calls for an urgent review of proposed Victorian government funding for the next financial year, to ensure we can continue to deliver life-saving services to women and children.

We join Domestic Violence Victoria, the Victorian Council of Social Service, No To Violence and other partner agencies in urging the State Government to reconsider plans to offer social service organisations a funding increase which is less than the rising costs of delivering services.

We have today written to State Government ministers calling for a fair rate of indexation that covers the cost of implementing the minimum wage increase (+2.5%), the increase in the superannuation guarantee (+0.5%), and the cost of implementing the Portable Long Service Leave scheme (+1.65%).

These extra costs are in addition to years of under-funding, and inefficient short-term 'drip funding'.

Any offer that does not meet the extra costs will significantly impact our service – which employs more than 90 staff across the Loddon region. We do not want to face the possibility of job losses and /or reductions in vital services.

Centre for Non-Violence delivers services for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, and for men to change their behaviour.

In the 2019-20 financial year, CNV responded to more than 2700 police referrals, and provided a range of case management support, therapeutic services, financial support, emergency accommodation, family violence training and men's behaviour change programs for more than 2500 people across our region.

Centre for Non-Violence chief executive officer Margaret Augerinos says "saying 'thanks' for what we do, is not enough".

"We have assessed the impact of these changes, and what government is offering is just under half of what we actually need," she said. "If we only receive half, critical services and programs will be lost. It will impact on the capacity for us to deliver services across the region.

"Already our funding is insufficient to meet demand and if we do not receive adequate funding this year, we will have to make decisions about where we can provide services, and what we can provide."

Ms Augerinos said that during the 2020-21 financial year, Centre for Non-Violence had seen increased demand on an already stretched service as a result of Covid-19 – along with an increase in the frequency and severity of violence, and complexity in the cases staff were managing.

"Current funding levels fail to meet the true cost of delivering our services – and the proposed funding indexation for 2021-22 further fails to cover recent cost rises. We absolutely need proper indexation and analysis of what it costs to deliver high quality, evidence-based services.

"In rural and regional areas in particular, there is insufficient recognition of the cost of delivering services across large and diverse geographical areas, which often costs more because of large distances and increased infrastructure.

We again call for strategic engagement with the sector about the complexities of our region, long term funding, tailored solutions for regional areas and to have the voices of specialist family violence services amplified as experts in the prevention of violence against women and children.

Centre for Non-Violence covers the Loddon region – which includes the City of Greater Bendigo and the Central Goldfields, Mt Alexander, Macedon Ranges, Loddon and Campaspe shires. Centre for Non-Violence can be contacted on 1800 884 292 | The 24-hour statewide safe steps family violence crisis response line is 1800 015 188 | Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491 | In an emergency, call 000