



**Australian Federal  
Government**

**Pre-Budget Submission  
2026-2027**



**Centre for  
Non-Violence**



Centre for  
**Non-Violence**

PO Box 958, Bendigo, Victoria 3552  
www.cnv.org.au  
reception@cnv.org.au  
ABN 12 974 015 985

Attn: Treasurer, the Hon Jim Chalmers MP

The Treasury

Langton Crescent

Parkes ACT 2600

Australia

Dear Hon Jim Chalmers,

**Re: Prioritise Specialist Family Violence Services to Support Victim Survivors and help us to end Violence against Women, Children and Diverse Communities.**

The Centre for Non-Violence makes this submission to the 2026-27 Australian Federal Budget as we recognise that government has a critical opportunity to tackle the national crisis of men's violence, and commit to an economy that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of women, children and diverse communities experiencing family violence.

The family violence sector right across the nation is facing major challenges. With the rise in extremist misogyny right across our communities, services like ours are experiencing a distinct and worrying increase in not only demand on services, but also the risk of lethality for victim survivors, including children. Each and every year thousands of victim survivors require the support of family violence services and disappointingly many do not receive the service they so desperately need due to demand.

Located in regional Victoria, CNV works with people across the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Wurundjeri peoples, with offices in Bendigo, Echuca, Kyneton and Maryborough.

We deliver a range of programs, including prevention, crisis, and therapeutic services. We support victim survivors of family violence from first contact through to recovery, whilst working in parallel with men using violence.

By working with both victim survivors and men using violence, we provide increased safety, participation and support for families and individuals impacted by family violence. This integrated approach is key to how we support people.

CNV has a commitment to ensuring victim survivors of family violence are safe and those who use violence are held accountable.

Last financial year, our organisation provided intensive case management for over 2000 individuals seeking safety and support from family violence in the last financial year (2024-2025), 990 of these individuals were children experiencing family violence. This is in addition to the 4,200 women and children provided intake and assessment through The Orange Door network in our region.

In Victoria, police respond to a family violence incident every 6 minutes. The latest data from the Victorian Crime Statistics supports what our staff are witnessing on the front lines: increased reports of family violence incidents, increased risk, and an increasing number of children victim survivors.

If we want to see the mandate of violence eradicated in a generation as set out by *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* realised, then we have to find ways for our partnerships between the sector, the State and Federal Governments strengthened. This will necessarily require a clear investment that will support organisations like ours to not only meet demand, but crucially, support us to continue to innovate and provide tailored, place-based responses to family violence that reflect the lived realities of communities living in regional and rural Australia.

In Australia a woman is murdered, on average every 4 days, most often by a man known to her. Every 2 weeks a child is also murdered as a result of family violence. Devastatingly, these lives have been forcibly taken by a violence that is one hundred per cent preventable.

Yet, this crisis has failed to be adequately or effectively addressed in previous Budgets. This is in spite of the fact that there is widespread agreement about the problems we face and the solutions we need. Notably, frameworks and funding agreements such as the *National Plan* and the *Federation Funding Agreement Affordable Housing, Community Services and Other* sets out ambitious tasks and goals to end violence in a generation. However, the reality on the ground is that with an under-funded family violence sector we are not going to be able to realise meaningful change. We are not going to end violence in a generation if we continue to divert funds away from the specialist family violence sector. We are the Federal Government's greatest asset and source of support in tackling this national crisis. We need a Budget that adequately and effectively supports us to do the work we do.

Front-line specialist services like the Centre for Non-Violence are experiencing unprecedented demand, much more complex and high-risk cases, and staffing shortages - against a funding context defined by yearly allocations, lapses and shortfalls.

Despite this increasingly challenging environment our staff work tirelessly to increase safety and improve lives for victim survivors. Year on year, we meet or exceed the majority of our funded targets. What sits behind these funded targets, is a landscape defined by expertise, best practice approaches and innovative program and service design. What these targets fail to capture is the necessary and core work that keeps women, children and diverse communities safe from harm; this includes our prevention work, our investment into client management systems that allow us to track in real time, outcomes over targets. The invisible work, that our staff do each and every day is making a real

difference to the lives of victim survivors - it is our ask that this work be recognised and that our experience and expertise has a place at the table when investing in legislative and decision-making processes.

Estimates in Victoria alone show a 20 per cent deficit in funding meeting the needs of *current* core deliverables - this funding estimate however, is just to meet existing client needs: it does not account for the victim survivors who have unmet needs and are being turned away from life-saving services and support.

Our submission also highlights the importance of specialist family violence services in informing decision-making and prevention initiatives. One-size fits all approaches to family violence prevention, response and recovery are not the solution. While Government has recognised that there is a national crisis and developed a suite of frameworks, plan and agreements - including funding agreements - these have often occurred in the absence of the informed expertise and experience of the specialist family violence sector. We need to be given the levers that allow the sector, across all states and territories to more effectively work together, in partnership with Government to build our evidence base and harness it to better inform practice, systems and legislation. Without a coordinated response to this national crisis, we continue to risk lives and continue to enable adults using violence to circumnavigate accountability and responsibility for their use of violence.

Tailored, accessible services for victim survivors and adults using violence requires not only investment at the sector level, but also a funding commitment to embed specialist family violence expertise federally.

A safe home, a funded specialist family violence sector and family violence and trauma-informed systems are basic necessities that every victim survivor in Australia deserves. We urge the Government to address these issues in its next Federal Budget and create a mandate to work in partnership with the sector in ending violence against women, children and diverse communities.

Margaret Augerinos

CEO, Centre for Non-Violence

# Ending Family Violence Against Women, Children and Diverse Communities: Funding the Continuum from Prevention, to Response and Recovery.

Ending violence against women, children and diverse communities requires ongoing commitment to engage with, invest in and support specialist family violence services. The family violence front-line is facing an uncertain future with ongoing funding cuts and increasing rates of reported family violence right across the country. The Centre for Non-Violence calls on the federal government to increase engagement with, and investment in, specialist family violence services to help us end men's violence against women, children and diverse communities.

## Our Work

For over 35 years, the Centre for Non-Violence, has worked tirelessly to improve system responses to family violence, to improve the lives of victim survivors and to support adults using violence to make better, safer choices for their loved ones.

The Centre for Non-Violence is Central Victoria's leading specialist family violence response and recovery services, spanning across six LGAs in Central Victoria<sup>1</sup>: Yorta Yorta Country, Dja Dja Wurrung Country, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Country to help women, children and diverse communities live free from family violence. We have offices in Echuca, Maryborough, Bendigo and Kyneton and our staff travel across the region to support clients in need.

Over these three and a half decades, we have developed a range of innovative, evidence-based and effective prevention, early intervention response and recovery programs that have improved the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors including children.

But this work comes at a cost. And with increasing demand on services - our service region alone has seen an 18.6 per cent increase<sup>2</sup> in police referrals since 2019-2020 to 2023-2024 - we must ensure that specialist family violence services are adequately funded and supported to face this demand. Importantly, part of this support is to recognise and actively engage with specialist family violence services at the national level to help define policy approaches, legislative decision-making and consultation processes every step of the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Cover Image: A snapshot of one of the rural roads that defines our local landscape in Central Victoria. This image has been taken on Dja Dja Wurrung Country - one of the six LGAs that our organisation operates in.

<sup>2</sup> Collation of data captured from the Victorian Crime Statistics family violence data dashboard. Available from: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/> [Accessed: 28 January 2026]

## At the Front-line of the National Crisis: Support Specialist Family Violence Services through Increased Investment and Engagement

We are facing a national crisis of men's violence against women, children and diverse communities. And each and every day the specialist family violence sector is at the front-line supporting these women, children and people from diverse communities experiencing family violence.

Last year alone, 77 women and 26 children had their lives forcibly taken from them most often by a man known to them. These lives lost are the result of a final act of violence; violence that was 100 per cent preventable. Yet we know that for thousands more people right across our country, the threat of serious harm or death is an everyday lived experience that requires specialist family violence support.

Last financial year our staff at The Orange Door (TOD) and within the Centre for Non-Violence provided over 50,000 hours of specialist risk assessment and case management support to victim survivors and adults using violence.

Our staff worked with 5,816 clients (victim survivors and those using violence) through TOD in providing risk assessments and planning support equating to 30,736 hours of support. The Centre for Non-Violence provided specialist case management support to 2060 clients; including 678 women and 990 children victim survivors, equating to just over 27,000 hours of support.

The specialist family violence sector is at the forefront of expertise and knowledge on the drivers of violence, on prevention, response and recovery.

However, despite more than 30 years of expertise and evidence-backed approaches to working with people using and experiencing family violence, the sector is often disconnected from the policy and decision-makers. And far too often the sector is expected to adapt and change and implement policies and legislation that is not family-violence or trauma-informed.

The Government has a real opportunity with this Budget to work with the sector, to create a mandate that builds an ongoing, sustainable model for engaging specialist family violence expertise that will increase safety and wellbeing and improve the lives of victim survivors, including children. The rise of misinformation and extremist misogyny - including in our schools - is seeing in real-time an increase in violence and risk of harm and loss of life. It is more important now more than ever that we work together to share information, our expertise and build a funding landscape that supports specialists services to deliver programs and services including in the prevention space that will save lives and support the Government to realise its ambitious, yet necessary goals as set out in the *National Plan to End Violence*.

### **Recommendation:**

- **The establishment of a national body comprised of specialist family violence providers to expand our evidence-base and capacity building for information sharing and best practice development.**

## Adults Using Violence: Dedicated Investment is Needed

Our organisation works with adults using violence, and we have a suite of programs and services inviting adults using violence to recognise, take accountability for their use of family violence and ultimately give them the opportunity to make better, safer and more respectful decisions in their relationships with their family moving forward.

However, we are not alone in experiencing low engagement rates for adults using violence into specialist programs and services. To date, men that engage with our service do so mostly through court-mandated orders.

We need to invest in improved system responses to adults using violence; including investment in the capacity and capability of specialist services to fast track adults using violence into programs and services at point of first contact. We know that where there has been a police response to a family violence incident, that the perpetrator is highly motivated to seek support, however, this window for change quickly closes once it becomes clear that there is no ongoing accountability. It is not uncommon for the adult using violence to remain largely invisible within a policing and judicial system response and we know, through extensive experience and data collection that outcomes for victim survivors are far safer and long-term when the adult using violence is kept in view. This is where investment into the specialist family violence sector really comes into it's own. We are best placed to provide a whole of family response to this national crisis. We are doing the work, we do it each and every day. And each and every day we are innovating and developing best practice models that are tailored to the needs of victim survivors and adults using violence in our communities. But we cannot continue to do this in a funding shortfall.

Investment into innovative programs that are tailored to meet the needs of those using violence is a critical component in expanding the sector's reach and improving outcomes for victim survivors. For example, the Centre for Non-Violence has been delivering the 'Making aMENDs' program since 2017. It is an integrated, father-focused and evidence-informed men's behaviour change program. The model has been instrumental in informing our best practice approaches to working with men using violence and addressing the impacts that family violence has on children victim survivors. The 'Making aMENDs' model provides safety and accountability through best practice approaches including - but not limited to:

- Enhanced intake, risk and safety assessment (for both victim survivors and men using violence)
- Family centred, holistic and trauma-informed support, monitoring and follow up
- Integrated services and Family Safety Contact for adult victim survivors and children, including responding to children as victim survivors in their own right
- Father focused 1:1 case management support, group programs and curriculum
- Access to accommodation and housing support for men who due to their use of violence are excluded from the family home
- Access to therapeutic recovery and counselling supports (for both adult and child victim survivors and fathers using violence)

- Child-centred content for men using violence to recognise and understand the impacts of family violence on parenting, children’s wellbeing, development and safety

A snapshot of the important, life-changing outcomes that this program has delivered to both men using violence and victim survivors include:

- Increased recovery and justice outcomes
- Integrated access to therapeutic counselling programs and services for victim survivors through Family Safety Contact
- Best practice model development and family centred curriculum, resources and tool development
- Enhanced service and system integration and case coordination to increase family safety, accountability and access to services to address intersecting needs such as mental health, AoD, CALD and disability supports.

As a front-line service we see the real impacts that programs such as this have in increasing safety and improving lives for victim survivors including children.

For example, our program **evaluation study demonstrated that 80 per cent of women reported feeling safer** due to support received through Family Safety Contact during the program. 42 per cent of the women also had observed positive behavioural changes in the men participating in the program.

For the men engaged in the program, there was demonstrable increased understandings of how their behaviour affects children, including emotion and psychological distress, long-term development impacts, and disrupted trust and relationships.

*“I know that not seeing my children has been hard, but it has been necessary for me to become who I really want to be as a father.”*

- Making aMENDs Group Participant (father-focused group program)

Despite these significant, positive outcomes and opportunities for change through our Making aMENDs program, our organisation has been forced to reduce the scope of the model due to a lack of sustainable funding. This is, quite simply not good enough. And it’s putting lives of women and children at serious risk of harm.

### Complexity of Need: Lethality Risk Indicators are on the Rise

We are experiencing a significant need for longer, more complex case management support to meet the worrying trend of more extreme risk of lethality indicators.

In 2024-2025, the most prevalent lethality indicator identified in victim survivor assessments was controlling behaviours, followed closely by alcohol and other drug misuse, stalking, jealousy and obsessive behaviour, and threats of serious harm.

Coercive control remains a core tactic of family violence—a deliberate pattern of behaviours designed to intimidate, isolate, and dominate victim survivors.

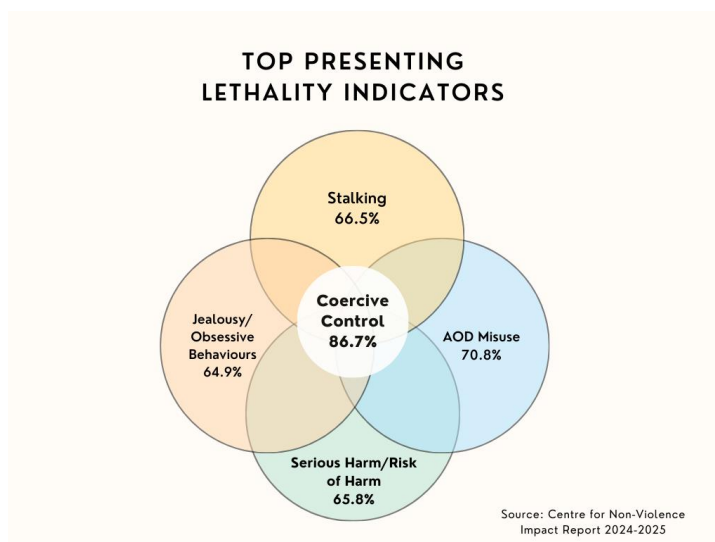
These behaviours are often subtle and invisible to outsiders, yet profoundly harmful, causing fear, humiliation, and restricting freedom of choice.

Tactics may include:

- Controlling what someone wears, where they go and what they do
- Gestures and looks
- Social isolation
- Put-downs and threats
- Financial control
- Restriction of movement
- Legal and systems abuse

Our specialist family violence practitioners undertake professional risk assessments to explore these patterns, combining victim survivor self-assessment with practitioner judgment to classify risk into three categories:

- Serious Risk
- Elevated Risk
- At Risk



Safety planning and monitoring informs safety planning and risk management strategies, supported by information sharing, case coordination, and system mobilisation to keep perpetrators in view and accountable.

Over the last financial year alone (2024-2025), the Centre for Non-Violence has seen a **50 per cent increase in the number of women and children experiencing 10 or more lethality indicators**. This necessarily requires much more intensive case management and system mobilisation responses required to increase safety. Our specialist staff work intensively and tirelessly to advocate for improved safety and wellbeing right across the spectrum of support: from first contact, through to recovery.

We know that with rising public awareness and growing cost of living pressures that the sector, in every state and territory is experiencing higher more demand for services, we need to be given the mechanisms - including sustainable funding models - that would allow us to respond to this growing need.

Equally, our workers deserve better. They need to know that when they turn up to work each and every day, that they have the capacity to be able to provide a safe response to the people and families that they work with. It is unfair on our front-line staff to carry the burden of budget constraints when making decisions around safety planning for victim survivors.

Importantly, our staff also deserve fairer working conditions. Sustainable funding supports a strong, capable workforce and better outcomes for victim survivors and those working every day to support and keep them safe. Insecure funding results in high staff turnover,

lost expertise and programs being cut or delayed. It results in people losing their lives, when they could be supported to survive and thrive. We need the Federal Government to commit to a funding model that supports sector sustainability – we've been drip-fed for far too long and its putting lives and livelihoods at risk.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Increased and ongoing funding for specialist services to provide tailored programs and services for Adults Using Violence.**
- **Increased and ongoing funding for specialist services to provide tailored programs and services for victim survivors including children.**
- **Short-term, drip-fed funding needs to be replaced by long-term, reliable funding that meets demand. A minimum of 5-year funding contracts would enable services to plan, grow and meet the needs of all communities right across Australia - particularly for specialist services supporting regional and rural areas where services must be tailored to meet the unique needs of communities.**
- **Improve funding models for workforce capacity building between state and federal government.**

### When Home Isn't Safe: The Intersect between Family Violence and Homelessness

For a significant number of the women and children who are seeking safety from family violence, the risk of homelessness and housing security is acute. The combined pressures of a rise in the cost of living, housing unaffordability and availability and the devastating impacts of climate change, particularly for regional and rural communities at risk of flooding and bushfires is placing very real and immediate need to address a safe housing response for victim survivors.

The latest data from the AIHW unequivocally highlights that for women and children, family violence is the leading cause of homelessness.

In 2024-2025, 41 per cent of all clients seeking support through the Centre for Non-Violence had experienced family violence<sup>3</sup> and 1 in 4 of these clients had their housing needs unmet, including children.<sup>4</sup>

More than 80 women and children who accessed CNV support in 2024-2025 spent **over 6 months in crisis accommodation - predominantly motels.**

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children accessing our services, the average time spent in crisis accommodation is more than three months.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2025. 'Homelessness and Homelessness Services', report. Available from: <http://aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services> [Accessed: 19 January 2026] Around 3 in 4 SHS clients experiencing FDV are female. Among male clients experiencing family violence, around 2 in 3 are children.

<sup>4</sup> — 2025. 'Clients Experiencing Family and Domestic Violence', report. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/shs-client-groups/o-clients-experiencing-family-and-domestic-violence> [Accessed: 19 January 2026]

Crisis accommodation is designed as a short-term immediate need solution. It is not a long-term solution for those who have experienced or are experiencing family violence – and yet, for many of our clients, with no long-term housing options beyond the crisis, the only choice is to risk homelessness or return to the perpetrator. This is no choice at all.

Far too often the only crisis housing that our staff are able to secure for clients are motel rooms. These are not fit for purpose housing options and often lack the necessary infrastructure that would enable victim survivors to have a safe place to land and recover. Often, the motel rooms lack basic facilities like kitchens and safe spaces for children to play.

For victim survivors living in rural and regional areas access to crisis accommodation – including motels – is further reduced as often, including in our own region, tourism impacts availability; particularly during holiday periods and long weekends.<sup>5</sup> Concerningly, this is also where we also often see an escalation in the reported rates of family violence and far too often, there is nowhere safe to go.

A lack of sustainable housing options is contributing to victim survivor displacement and having long-term impacts on both adult and child wellbeing where victim survivors are forced to leave their community, their employment, change schools, and move away from support. To help combat this displacement, we need to see an expansion of the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program to provide capital investment to fund the building, renovation or purchase of emergency accommodation to support women and children in circumstances, where staying safely at home is not possible. The Centre for Non-Violence alongside Annie North Women’s Refuge and Haven Home Safe were successful in a bid to build three purpose-built crisis properties in Bendigo to support women and children who have experienced family violence.

Through this program, the Centre-for Non-Violence and Annie North provide specialised risk and safety focused family violence support services to the women and children housed in the new development, while Haven Home Safe manage the properties and link residents in with other supports as part of the Sidney Myer Haven services and activities. This is an example of a positive, tailored solution for rural and regional communities that prioritises specialist family violence and trauma-informed wrap around supports for victim survivors. No one housing solution will address the rise of homelessness among victim survivors. A safe and sustainable crisis housing response requires a dedicated and coordinated investment between the states and territories and Federal Government.

The Centre for Non-Violence holds the position that there needs to be ongoing and committed funding from the Federal Government for a safe at home response for victim survivors. This includes recognising the Personal Safety Initiative (PSI) as part of a core delivery of services. The PSI program supports victim survivors to remain in the home; supported by safety planning that can include the installation of security cameras, sweeping of homes, cars and technology including mobile phones and the provision of personal safety devices to victim survivors. This program is a necessary and critical service

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<sup>5</sup> Safe and Equal 2025. *Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria*, 31 March. Available from: [chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/SUB\\_20250331\\_SaE-Submission-to-Inquiry-into-the-Supply-of-Homes-in-Regional-Victoria-FINAL.pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/SUB_20250331_SaE-Submission-to-Inquiry-into-the-Supply-of-Homes-in-Regional-Victoria-FINAL.pdf) [Accessed: 28 January 2026]

delivery that can offer a safe and long-term solution for victim survivors. Yet, each and every year our organisation, alongside others in the sector are not given the guarantee that the program will be funded.

Regional and rural areas across the spectrum of housing from emergency and crisis accommodation, right through to social housing and affordable housing in the private rental market are at a critical disadvantage and it's placing lives at risk and impacting on long-term victim survivor safety and wellbeing.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Increased investment to the National Plan to End Homelessness with a particular focus on the drivers of homelessness including family violence**
- **A new National Homelessness Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories**
- **Investment in culturally safe, regionally tailored models for different community contexts.**
- **An expansion of the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program**
- **Committed ongoing funding of the PSI program for family violence services**

### **In Conclusion**

As a front-line specialist family violence service, we work tirelessly with victim survivors and adults using violence to increase safety and wellbeing. Our innovative and evidence informed programs and services are making real, lasting and positive impacts for our clients.

But we are at crisis point. We can no longer be expected to do this work through drip-fed and ad-hoc funding streams and competitive short-term grant rounds. If we hope to achieve the much-needed outcomes set out in the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* we need to see a Budget that prioritises specialist family violence prevention, response and recovery.

Let us do the work we need to do to end violence against women, children and diverse communities.

**Fund the sector. Recognise our expertise. Together we can prevent the violence before it begins.**

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### **Contact Us:**

Dr Clare Shamier, Head of Business Development and Advocacy, Centre for Non-Violence:

email: [clares@cnv.org.au](mailto:clares@cnv.org.au)