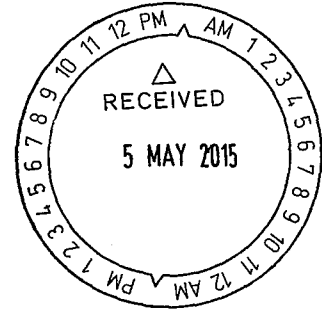




Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection



Our ref: 43-15594

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 February 2015 regarding funding for family and domestic violence services in Western Australia.

The State Government is committed to eliminating violence against women and their children.

This is evidenced by election commitments to manage the impact and address the prevalence of family and domestic violence. These include:

- a new crisis accommodation service offering specialist accommodation and support services in the south-west region;
- the construction and operational funding for a new cluster model refuge in the metropolitan region of Ellenbrook;
- the building and development of a new replacement facility for the Wooree Miya Women's Refuge in the south-east metropolitan region. The proposed new facility will accommodate ten families, or ten women and 30 children;
- introducing strict controls and GPS tracking of serious domestic violence offenders;
- improving access to violence restraining orders for domestic violence victims with children;
- additional funding for victims of crime services and the establishment of a Commissioner for Victims of Crime; and
- the establishment of a new family violence legal service in Perth for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Significant work has been undertaken to improve inter-agency collaboration with the establishment of family and domestic violence response teams throughout Western Australia within the last year. These teams represent a partnership between the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department), Western Australia Police and non-government domestic violence services.

The Department, Western Australia Police and the Department of Corrective Services have signed a tripartite agreement to strengthen protocols supporting information sharing and collaborative case management of domestic violence offenders.

In addition, the Department has been working in partnership with the Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence Services (WA) Inc to map and review the domestic violence sector. A focus of the review has been working together to build a comprehensive, integrated response to domestic violence and facilitating appropriate service responses for women and children across Western Australia. An important component of this approach is that three specialist 24/7 emergency response services will take a lead coordination and facilitation role across the Perth metropolitan area and will be the key referral points for the Department's Crisis Care Unit to provide better access to services for women and children in imminent danger. This new response will be operational from October 2015.

Currently, the State Government provides significant funding to 37 accommodation and support services throughout the State for women and children escaping family and domestic violence, as well as a range of family and domestic violence counselling, advocacy and support services. In addition, through the National Partnership on Homelessness Agreement (NPAH), the Department provides funding for the safe at home and domestic violence outreach programs which commenced in 2010-11 and provide support for women and children escaping domestic violence to remain in the family home when it is safe to do so.

As you may be aware, on 23 March 2015 the Commonwealth Government announced their commitment of \$230 million to fund the NPAH – which includes safe at home and domestic violence outreach programs – for a further two years, from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2017. Western Australia will receive \$14.97 million per year under the 2015-17 NPAH for the provision of homelessness services. The Commonwealth's offer is contingent on the level of Commonwealth funding being matched by the State Government.

The Commonwealth have advised that funding must be directed to the provision of front-line homelessness services, with an expectation that priority be given to funding service providers which cater to the particularly vulnerable who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, that is specifically women and children experiencing domestic violence and young people under 18 years.

The State Government is currently reviewing the Commonwealth's proposal and seeking clarification from officials on a number of matters. The State Government is committed to ensuring that the 2015-17 NPAH is finalised urgently to ensure stability in the homelessness service sector.

Both the NPAH and National Affordable Housing Agreement are being considered as part of the White Paper on the Reform of the Federation. It is likely there may be a change in future funding arrangements in the long term which will impact on homelessness services, including family and domestic violence accommodation and support services.

The State Government remains committed to addressing homelessness and family and domestic violence services with a continued focus on early intervention and proactive services.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Helen Morton", with a decorative flourish at the end.

Helen Morton MLC
MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION