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QLD DOMESTIC, FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SPECIALISTS PLEA FOR FRONTLINE FUNDING SUPPORT

Queensland frontline domestic, family, and sexual violence specialist services raise alarm that recent funding announcements are not adequate to support lasting change, to end the national domestic and family violence crisis.

BRISBANE, QLD – 01 May 2024: Queensland (QLD) domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) specialists today issued a plea for action to significantly increase frontline service funding ahead of the October 2024 QLD election, and the national cabinet meeting to discuss gender-based violence.

The Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ), a representative body for specialist DFSV services, women's legal services, refuges, and women's health services in Queensland, has raised the alarm that government funding allocations continue to under-resource frontline DFSV services.

Whilst the alliance welcomed the QLD Premier's Monday announcement of an additional \$36 million for the sector, this is not a significant enough increase in funding for non-government frontline specialist DFSV services to meet demand.

EVAWQ's analysis of the Queensland Government's investment into preventing domestic and family violence against women and children has found that only 15% of the investment for implementing the recommendations of the *Hear Her Voice – Report One* has been clearly allocated to non-government frontline DFSV services.

Frontline DFSV services include safety planning and counselling for victim-survivors, emergency accommodation, and perpetrator behaviour change programs. Across QLD, the alliance's services are experiencing between 30 to 300% increases in demand, resulting from government (including police) and non-government services referrals and self-referrals. Victim-survivors are consequently facing ever increasing delays due to the lack of resourcing - in some instances waitlists are over 6 months.

EVAWQ is calling for all QLD political parties to commit to these three priorities ahead of the 2024 QLD election:

- A strong and sustainable specialist DFSV sector
- Growing, developing, and retaining specialist workforces
- Investing in First Nations communities, initiatives, and services.

This includes matching funding provided to police measures against family and domestic violence, to enable frontline services to provide prevention, crisis, and on-going support. This would be an additional funding of \$300 million per year to frontline Not for Profit Specialist services.

National Cabinet:

EVAWQ welcomes the commitment displayed by the political leaders of Australia by coming together today to address the scourge of DFSV in our country and urges National Cabinet to take immediate action to address violence against women and children. EVAWQ is calling on the Federal Government to immediately match the 20% increased funding committed to yesterday by the QLD State Government.

Quotes attributable to Amie Carrington - Ending Violence Against Women Queensland President and Domestic and Family Violence Centre CEO:

“We need an additional \$300 million per year to fix the backlog. It is time to back Queensland women, children and men in need of vital specialist support.”

“Women cannot do this alone. We need our leaders to step up. We need men to step up. The time to act is now, together, to end this national crisis.”

“The Federal Government has committed 2.3 billion dollars under the National Action Plan to end Violence Against Women and Children. This pales in comparison to the over 50 billion dollars invested this year alone for defence. When will the Government focus on the war being waged against women and girls at home, as much as wars overseas?”

Quotes attributable to Beck O’Connor - DVConnect CEO and Ending Violence Against Women Queensland Committee Member:

“We too are on the frontline taking a call for help every four minutes. When a woman calls us from her car, with her children, after fleeing a life-threatening situation, we need to be able to respond. Under current funding arrangements we are stretched thin. This is entirely preventable and could be addressed tomorrow with increased resources.”

Quotes attributable to Nadia Bromley - Women’s Legal Queensland CEO and Ending Violence Against Women Queensland Committee Member:

“We look forward to seeing clear commitments and investment from government. We are in a national crisis. Survivors and front-line workers have told those in power what needs to happen, this is their chance to show they are listening.”

Quotes attributable to Emma Iwinska – Women’s Health and Equality Queensland CEO and Ending Violence Against Women Queensland Committee Member:

“Unfortunately, community-based services that deliver direct support to women and children have been drastically underfunded for many years. Women’s Health and Equality has a 6 month wait for women wanting to access counselling. We have also seen very little government investment in the programs that actually stop violence happening.

Covid showed us how quickly governments and the community can respond to national emergencies. We need that kind of response now. Violence against women is a national emergency and we need government funding to address it as such.”

Quotes attributable to Lucy Gregory - Domestic Violence Prevention Centre CEO and Ending Violence Against Women Queensland Committee Member:

“It’s well known that police are reporting significant increases in their domestic and family violence call outs – what the community may not realise is that specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services receive referrals not only from police, but from many services, alongside self-referrals – there are so many pathways to our services, and we need adequate funding to be able to meet this demand.”

“We used to be able to provide counselling for every woman, child and young person that came to us, we just can’t do that now, we cannot meet that demand. If we had this money we could, and that’s how we would stop intergenerational violence continuing.”

“Over the weekend, I was filled with hope to see the community coming together, especially the number of men that stood up and said enough is enough. Together we can end domestic, family and sexual violence in this generation. I can feel the community behind us. Now is the time.”

****ENDS****

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About Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ):

Ending Violence Against Women Queensland (EVAWQ) provides a representative and united voice for Queensland women and children affected by gender-based violence, and the individuals and service agencies that provide specialist support. Our organisation shares the depth and diversity of knowledge from specialist services within women's health, women's refuge and housing, women's legal, and domestic, family and sexual violence to a broad range of government and non-government stakeholders in relation to all aspects of gender-based violence.

EVAWQ's governance structure was designed by, and for, the sector to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and communication, and promote timely and effective decision making and recommendations on key policy issues.

EVAWQ provides expert advice and fosters partnerships at both state and national levels. EVAWQ's submissions, to positively inform and influence government policy, have included violence prevention, law reform, school curriculum, and women's safety and wellbeing. EVAWQ regularly engages with government, on behalf of a diversity of specialist sector organisations, to provide advice in relation to emerging trends, service demands and funding equity.

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