



Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
Minister for Families and Social Services
Manager of Government Business in the Senate

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$3 million boost for family violence support

The Morrison Government has increased its investment in counselling and support services that support women and, in particular, children who have or are experiencing family violence.

Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston today announced an investment of more than \$3 million over two years with money being delivered to providers from next month.

“We are committed to making sure that services have the capacity to deal with the changing nature of presentations which we understand has become more complex during the pandemic,” Minister Ruston said.

“This funding will allow services to engage additional staff, upskill existing staff and deliver services in new locations.

“It will also support children who have witnessed or experienced family violence which is critical at a time when our young people are dealing with so much uncertainty.”

The funding will be shared between 23 existing service providers located across every state and territory with 93 locations nationwide.

While the number of clients being supported has remained steady, a number of service providers have reported a marked uptick in demand with the average number of sessions per client each month increasing from 1.8 sessions in January 2020 to more than 2.8 in April 2020.

In addition, the Australian Institute of Criminology paper released today indicates that for many women the pandemic has coincided with the onset or an escalation of violence and abuse.

“Sadly we know that times of crisis can increase the incidence of family, domestic and sexual violence which is why our Government has increased by nearly 50 per cent annual funding in the wake of COVID-19,” Minister Ruston said.

“No matter the crisis, there’s still no place for domestic violence or abuse.

“Our priority is ensuring that when people who are experiencing family and domestic violence reach out for support, they are able to access it as quickly as possible.”

In March the Prime Minister announced a \$150 million domestic violence emergency response package to boost frontline and national support services over the period of the pandemic. This comes on top the existing \$252 million commitment over 2019-20 and 2020-21 that is delivered through the Department of Social Services.

To date under the Government's COVID-19 response, \$20 million has been used to support national services and \$32.5 million provided to states and territories to bolster their frontlines services. Further funding allocations will be made to respond to emerging demands.

The Morrison Government launched the *Help is Here* campaign to ensure Australians experiencing domestic violence or abuse know that help is available and where to find it during the coronavirus pandemic.

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au

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