



NSW 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission

Acknowledgment of Country

No to Violence acknowledges First Nations Peoples across these lands; the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters. We pay respect to all Elders, past, present, and emerging. We acknowledge a deep connection with country which has existed over 60,000 years. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and this was and always will be First Nation's land.

About No to Violence

No to Violence (NTV) is Australia's largest national peak body representing organisations and individuals working with men to end domestic and family violence. We are guided by the values of accountability, gender equity, leadership, and change.

No to Violence provides an important and unique function for the NSW men's domestic and family violence sector. Our Sector Development team provides secretariat and professional service support to the NSW Men's Behaviour Change Network. Working with Network members, we advocate for the resources, training, guidelines, and compliance regime needed to reduce and end men's domestic and family violence. NTV's NSW Sector Development activities are aligned with the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV), who are responsible for workforce development in the specialist areas of prevention and response to violence, abuse and neglect.

NTV plays a central role in the development of evidence, policy, and advocacy to support the work of specialist men's domestic and family violence nationally. NTV also delivers several frontline services, including the Men's Referral Service, Brief Intervention Service, Men's Accommodation and Counselling Service, and delivers the Family Court of Australia's Family Advocacy Support Service for men in Victoria.

Contact NTV:

Please forward inquiries about this paper to No to Violence:

Email: policyandresearch@ntv.org.au

Phone: 03 9487 4500

Men's Referral Service – for men concerned about their behaviour

1300 766 491

Summary of recommendations

<i>Budget Asks</i>	3
Increase core funding for existing MBCPs by \$7.04 million per year, to a total of \$15.60 million per year, to ensure programs are delivered to best practice standards	3
Provide \$8.14 million per year to fund 34 additional MBCPs to clear current waitlists	4
Provide \$4.35 million per year for case management and one-to-one interventions for men using violence	5
Provide \$2.84 million per year, for a total of \$14.20 million over five years, to fund the Men’s Accommodation and Counselling Service (MACS) so that women and children can remain safe at home and connected to their community	7
Increase funding to strengthen workforce capacity of the men’s domestic and family violence sector	8
<i>Contract Asks</i>	9
Implement NSW Labor’s election commitment of 5-year minimum funding contracts for all specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services	9
Create a provision in MBCP contracts that requires at least 30% of funding to be allocated to WCA, with a minimum of one full-time WCA worker per group	10
<i>Appendix – Calculations for increased core funding proposal for existing MBCPs</i>	11

Budget Asks

Increase core funding for existing MBCPs by \$7.04 million per year, to a total of \$15.60 million per year, to ensure programs are delivered to best practice standards

We have calculated that delivering the existing 65 MBCPs across 29 locations to best practice standards, at a cost of \$226,016 and \$248,617 per program depending on location and cohort, will cost \$15.60 million. See Appendix for details.

MBCPs are chronically underfunded and unable to deliver critical perpetrator interventions to best practice standards. NTV understands that MBCPs are currently receiving \$8.56 million per year, however we calculate that \$15.60 million per year is needed to ensure current programs delivered by DCJ-registered service providers are delivered to best practice standards. **This leaves a shortfall of \$7.04 million for existing MBCPs.** Until this funding inadequacy is rectified, best practice standards will struggle to be achieved.

Our proposed funding increase will significantly improve programs' capacity to meet the *Practice Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Behaviour Change Programs*, particularly with regard to:

- **Principle 1: Safety of victims, including children:** Funding will improve Women's and Children's Advocacy work through an increased number of contacts and more in-depth case management with affected family members.
- **Principle 3: Ongoing evaluation:** Better resourcing will enable enhanced risk assessment processes at intake and throughout programs, as well as at their conclusion, in addition to mid-and-post program reviews.
- **Principle 4: Professional practice:** Funding will support improved clinical supervision, group supervision and professional development.
- **Principle 5: Men responsible for DFV are held accountable:** Adequate funding will ensure comprehensive pre-group preparation of clients, case management and program coordination to embed accountability.

Best practice MBCP funding also incorporates sufficient resourcing for service providers to collect and enter data into the new information sharing portal and for costs associated with adhering to the Risk, Safety and Support Framework (RSSF). While we recognise that one-off payments were made to MBCP service providers to support the implementation of the information sharing portal and RSSF, this does not cover ongoing administration costs.

- Without being resourced to do this work, service providers are struggling to collect and enter this valuable data. This undermines the potential of the information sharing portal to contribute to building the evidence base of demand for services, the support needs of men accessing services, and what works to stop men's use of violence.
- Service providers have raised concerns with us about the significant ongoing resourcing required to ensure MBCP facilitators, team leaders and WCA workers can complete thorough RSSF assessments and subsequent case notes. This puts at risk effective ongoing use of the

RSSF, which is critical to understanding the scale and nature of men’s use of violence to ensure the safety of victim-survivors can be supported.

Service provider insight 

“When we are running an underfunded program, we can’t put resources into evaluation, which is limiting development of the evidence base.”

Provide \$8.14 million per year to fund 34 additional MBCPs to clear current waitlists

According to information provided to us from service providers there are at least 480 men using violence currently on waiting lists for MBCPs. The present NSW MBCP sector is not large enough to meet demand. As a result, hundreds of men each year can’t access programs to help them reduce or end their use of violence.

Service providers told us that their waitlists usually have between 20 and 40 men, with **men waiting on average between 3 to 5 months to access programs**. This means many men are waiting for more than 200 days to get help to change their behaviour. Every day that these men wait to engage in interventions, the safety of victim-survivors is compromised.

We have calculated that an additional 34 MBCPs are required to clear current waitlists. At best practice standards, at a cost of \$226,016 and \$248,617 per program depending on location and cohort, these will cost at least \$8.14 million.

	Additional MBCPs required	Cost per program	Total
Metro	14	\$226,016	\$3,164,224
Regional or rural / diverse cohorts	20	\$248,617	\$4,972,340
Total	34		\$8,136,564

Using a conservative estimate of 30 men on waitlists at each of the 16 registered providers, we calculate there is at least 480 men on waitlists at any given time. The actual number is arguably larger as some providers that operate MBCPs at multiple of the state’s 29 locations have multiple waitlists, meaning there are more than 16 waitlists across the state.

We predict that 60% of additional programs would need to service regional, rural and diverse cohorts. This is based on our understanding of the current split between metro MBCPs and regional, rural and diverse cohort MBCPs, and feedback from the sector that waitlists will be particularly difficult to clear in regional and rural locations, especially those with diverse and marginalised cohorts. This means 20

of the additional programs would need to be regional, rural and diverse cohort MBCPs, while 14 would be mainstream metro MBCPs.

Funding these additional regional, rural and diverse cohort MBCPs is crucial to ensuring all men in NSW can access programs that meet their needs. This is particularly needed to support the growth of:

- Culturally appropriate, community-led MBCPs for First Nations men that are developed and delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Culturally appropriate, in-language MBCPs for men from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The development and implementation of these additional MBCPs would be supported by NTV's Sector Development team.

Service provider insight

“Some MBCP clients are travelling two-and-a-half hours each way to attend programs...it’s absolutely ridiculous that there isn’t a program closer.”

Provide \$4.35 million per year for case management and one-to-one interventions for men using violence

Men’s domestic and family violence service providers struggle to deliver the required case management and one-to-one interventions to ensure men are properly prepared for MBCPs and/or remain engaged with services. Without adequate funding providers are either unable to do this or need to self-fund this work, redirecting resources from other important tasks to deliver this essential work.

This \$4.35 million allocation will fund 1 additional case worker (\$150,000 pa) at each of the 29 MBCP locations. This funding will mean approximately 290 additional men across NSW will receive case management and one-to-one intervention services at any given time. It will resource salary, administration, and supervision costs to enable each worker to manage a case load of 10 men. This covers coordinating case work; preparation and delivery of one-to-one counselling sessions; and supporting service engagement for intersecting issues, for example if a man using violence has a mental health issue. An additional allocation would be required to provide brokerage to address barriers to men’s participation and engagement in interventions, such as transport and medical costs.

NTV advocates for a broad suite of interventions to ensure all men using violence receive appropriate, effective, and timely responses to address their use of violence. MBCPs are not suitable for all men. This \$4.35 million allocation would provide one-to-one support to both help prepare men to participate in MBCPs and, importantly, create standalone interventions for men for whom MBCPs are not appropriate.

Case management to prepare men to participate in MBCPs

Many men using violence require medium-to-long-term case management support before they are ready to meaningfully engage in a MBCP. Case management also plays a critical role in keeping these men in view of the system and identifying barriers to them taking responsibility for their violence.

The importance of this work was highlighted in the recent domestic violence perpetrator case management trial, which filled an important service gap. Service providers shared that the program helped prepare men for MBCPs and are concerned that it has not been extended or expanded since the trial finished in June 2023.

Service provider insight

“Someone in our group was case managed for 16 weeks and it acted as a stepping stone into a group space so that he could participate and actively acknowledge his behaviour. Losing the case management funding was devastating.”

One-to-one interventions for men whom MBCPs are not appropriate

MBCPs are not suitable for all men using violence. This includes men with complex factors that intersect with their use of violence – such as alcohol and other drug misuse, mental health issues and cognitive impairment. **One-to-one interventions are needed to support men with complex needs and should form part of a broad suite of interventions to ensure that all men using violence can access appropriate and effective services.**

This proposed funding will improve the capacity of the men’s domestic and family violence sector to deliver therapeutic services that address complex factors and intergenerational trauma to support long-term behaviour change.

Having a suite of interventions, including one-to-one work, is critical for men’s sustained engagement with domestic and family violence and other support services, which ultimately increases safety for women and children over a longer period.

Service provider insight

“Individual work with the men allows them to work through some of their barriers that impact their ability to recognise the impact of their behaviours. This work can take time, we are building rapport and challenging long-held beliefs.”

Provide \$2.84 million per year, for a total of \$14.20 million over five years, to fund the Men’s Accommodation and Counselling Service (MACS) so that women and children can remain safe at home and connected to their community

The Men’s Accommodation and Counselling Service (MACS) is an innovative short-term program for men who have been legally excluded from the home as a result of their use of violence. MACS provides crisis accommodation to men on the condition that they meaningfully engage with counselling support services to address their use of violence, alongside safety support and advocacy to affected domestic and family members, during their stay.

Based on NTV’s experience operating MACS with the Salvation Army in Victoria, **this funding would accommodate approximately 350 men each year for an average length of stay of around 3 weeks.** Independent evaluations in 2021 and 2023 found MACS fills an important service gap and delivers strengthened client outcomes on taking responsibility for their actions and improving their understanding of family violence and its impacts. Interviewed MACS clients have identified that the supports enabled them to learn about domestic and family violence and how their behaviours need to change.

A NSW-specific model of MACS would help ensure women and children have the choice to remain at home and connected to their community. We believe this service is a critical step in shifting the burden away from victim-survivors and ensuring that responsibility sits squarely with those using violence. This period of stable accommodation provides a strong foundation for men’s engagement with counselling and can remove them from violence-supporting narrative environments; for example, couch-surfing with friends or other family members who condone their use of violence and/or blame victim-survivors.

MACS client insight

“[The program] helped me with how I behave, think, move, and it helped me take care of others.”

Service provider insight

“We struggle to effectively engage with men when they have competing priorities like stable housing. It’s important the user of violence is the one who leaves the home rather than the victim survivor being held responsible for their safety by being forced to leave.”

Increase funding to strengthen workforce capacity of the men's domestic and family violence sector

Significantly more investment is needed to improve professional development opportunities, supervision practices, and career pathways in the men's domestic and family violence sector to reduce turnover and build a strong, sustainable, and safe workforce. **This training and professional development is critical to ensuring practitioners can develop the highly specialised skillsets required to work with men who use violence**, as well as embed safety frameworks to address high levels of vicarious trauma and risk that are ever-present across the sector. Central to this is adequate clinical supervision training to strengthen workforce capacity as there is a lack of experienced facilitators who can provide group and individual supervision. This puts at risk a crucial element of best practice service, as supervision supports the development of practitioners' assessment skills, intervention techniques, ethical decision-making, and awareness of personal attitudes and biases.

Training also needs to be extended to universal services to improve the broader identification and response to domestic and family violence. Given the high rate of underreporting of family violence, men using violence often do not come to the attention of specialist services until the level of violence escalates. Due to the large number of interactions people have with universal services, improving their risk assessment and referral processes can significantly improve the level and timeliness of support that people using and experiencing domestic and family violence receive.

The need to strengthen workforce capacity is amplified this year with the enactment of the coercive control offence in June. Both the family violence sector and the broader service sector need to understand the implications of this legislation on their work to respond to coercive control. The enactment also serves as an opportunity to increase understandings more broadly of coercive control.

The 2024-25 Budget is an opportune time to deliver this resourcing, with the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Workforce: 10 year Strategy* set to be released in mid-2024.

Contract Asks

In response to underfunding, service providers are often forced to self-fund and redirect resources from other programs to ensure they can deliver intervention services that respond to the high prevalence and complexity of men using domestic and family violence.

To realise the potential of the above budget asks, the following contract provisions need to be embedded alongside them.

Implement NSW Labor’s election commitment of 5-year minimum funding contracts for all specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services

The New South Wales’s men’s domestic and family violence sector is being stifled by short-term contracts and a lack of clarity about future funding. Most contracts for men’s domestic and family violence interventions are set to expire this June, and the lack of clarity on the future of those contracts, and the tendency to provide short-term extensions, has caused significant issues for providers.

Addressing these issues will only be done by implementing **the Labor’s 2023 election commitment to 5-year funding cycles for community services**, which recognised the harmful workforce and service provision consequences resulting from the lack of sustainable funding.

The service providers we consulted with strongly emphasised the devastating workforce impacts of current short-term funding arrangements. It has resulted in an exodus of skilled employees from the sector because organisations are unable to offer long-term job security. In addition, the uncertainty of funding means employees continually working in fear of unemployment. This anxiety, and related staff turnover, leads to low morale, which creates a negative loop that reinforces retention issues. When services cannot retain employees, invaluable knowledge flows out the sector, which greatly diminishes specialist workforce capability. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to recruit staff to positions that can often only be offered for 6-12 months, with no guarantee of extension due to funding uncertainty. These challenges are compounded in rural and regional areas already struggling to attract people. Short-term contracts provide no incentive for people to relocate.

The lack of sustainable funding is also impacting the quality and availability of service provision. Providers are hesitant to add men using violence into programs which have funding uncertainty, leading to men not being supported and longer waitlists. Some providers have even been forced to cancel programs because contract renewals came too late – by which time clients had already been referred to seek support elsewhere, and the specialist staff needed to run the program had left.

Service provider insight

We find out at the last minute that we’ve got funding. At the end of last financial year, **we actually closed down an entire program, all of the staff had left, and we had told the clients that the program is closing on the 30th of June. And then on the 27th of June we got word that we could run for another 12 months.** Those sorts of things make the service struggle to provide what’s in the funding contract, and really poor experiences for clients and staff.”

Create a provision in MBCP contracts that requires at least 30% of funding to be allocated to WCA, with a minimum of one full-time WCA worker per group

As per NTV's calculations for best practice MBCPs, there needs to be a 30% funding allocation to WCA. This proportion is also based on consultations with service providers, who identified that existing WCA funding is inadequate for the scale of work required.

The current competitive tendering model for MBCPs is leading service providers to drive down quotes and sacrifice resourcing of WCA. If the government moved away from competitive tender processes and, instead, centre best practice funding guidelines, it would ensure keeping victim-survivors safe while men engage with programs is prioritised.

While the sector feels strongly that there should be at least one full-time WCA worker per group, most are currently only employed between two and four days per week. WCA workers caseloads become overwhelming as they work with multiple women for every man and for longer periods than the men are engaged in programs.

Service provider insight

"All that we have is one WCA worker at 4 days per week. We are working with 40 men, and at least 1.5 women per men. **This means our WCA worker has a caseload of at least 60 women.**"

Service provider insight

"WCA has much larger caseloads than is reflected in funding. Because men have multiple partners and WCA work is carried out a lot than men's engagement in MBCP...sometimes 12+ months longer. We have had several cases where man is assessed as not suitable [for MBCP] but we still provide ongoing casework to women. **One comparison is the male client had 4 service contacts and the female client had 52 service contacts.**"

Appendix – Calculations for increased core funding proposal for existing MBCPs

	Number of registered providers *	Number of programs run per year **	Cost per program	Total
Metro	8	25	\$226,016	\$5,650,400
Regional or rural / diverse cohorts	11	40	\$248,617	\$9,944,680
Total		65		\$15,595,080

** Some providers deliver programs in both metro and regional/diverse cohort settings*

*** There is no available government data on the number of MBCPs currently operating in NSW. These numbers are based on information provided by the sector*

NTV undertook a comprehensive study to develop these costings, which account for all salary, administrative and operational costs of a 20-week MBCP.

Our costings apply a 10% loading for programs in regional and rural locations and for programs delivered to diverse cohorts to help overcome additional service barriers these MBCPs face. This includes increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff; providing language translation and support services; and/or delivering adequate case management due to lack of suitable referral services for co-occurring support needs (e.g., mental health, alcohol and other drugs, gambling, and disability).