

Tasmanian 2025-26 Budget Submission

Keeping survivors at the centre by stopping people's use of family and sexual violence



20 December 2024

Acknowledgement 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 the largest peak body for organisations and individuals working with people using violence to end family violence and a member of the Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance. As a pro-feminist organisation, the safety and dignity of victim-survivors is at the centre of everything we do. We play a central role in the development of evidence, policy and advocacy to support the work to end people's use of family violence. NTV delivers a range of frontline services, including the Men's Referral Service, the Brief Intervention Service, the Men's Accommodation and Counselling Service, and a Family Advocacy and Support Service. Additionally, in Tasmania, incarcerated men have access to phone counselling via the Men's Referral Service. We also provide a range of training for the specialist family violence workforce, including a Graduate Certificate in partnership with Swinburne University and professional development for workforces who engage with people using violence.

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Recommendations

- 1. Increase investment in a broader suite of interventions to respond to people using violence**
 - \$2.96 million per year for No to Violence to establish and operate the Men’s Accommodation and Counselling program
- 2. Build a strong, sustainable family and sexual violence sector**
 - Commit \$650,000 to establish a Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Sector 10-Year Workforce Development Strategy as recommended by the Alliance
 - \$175,000 for a state-wide sector development role for men’s family violence services
 - Implement five-year contracts for service providers
 - Prioritise collaborative tendering processes

Executive Summary

While significant government commitments have been made to ensure Tasmania’s families and communities become free from all forms of family and sexual violence, more is needed to significantly reduce and, ultimately, end these forms of abuse. We will not end family and sexual violence without a strong, sustained and strategic focus on people, predominantly men, using violence.

In the past 12 months there have been 644 sexual assault cases and over 5,600 family violence incidents in Tasmania.¹ For those issued with Family Violence Orders (FVOs), there have been 1,225 breaches of general FVOs and 1,204 breaches of Police Family Violence Orders, representing increased risk and harm for victim-survivors.² Yet, criminal justice system data only captures a small percentage of family violence. Up to 80% of family violence is never reported to police.³ Many people using violence, therefore, never come into contact with the criminal justice system. To end family violence, Tasmania needs effective, targeted and readily available interventions to promote accountability and meaningfully change behaviours of the thousands of people, predominantly men, using family violence in the state. This is absolutely critical for a Tasmania free from all forms of family and sexual violence.

No to Violence values the opportunity to contribute to the Tasmanian 2025-2026 Budget Community Consultation process. This submission is informed by consultations with our Tasmanian members, colleagues from the Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (the Alliance), and the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS).

¹ Tasmania Police Reporting Dashboard. (2024). <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/dashboard/>

² Tasmania Police Reporting Dashboard. (2024). <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/dashboard/>

³ Personal Safety Survey 2021-22. (2024). Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/police/fdv-reported-to-police>

Recommendation 1: Increase investment in a broader suite of interventions to respond to people using violence

No to Violence advocates for a broader suite of targeted, effective and appropriate interventions for people using violence. There is no one ‘type’ of person using violence. While people using violence are predominantly men,⁴ they come from all age groups, income brackets, cultural backgrounds, family types and sexualities. This diversity means there is no ‘one size fits all’ response to help people take responsibility for their actions and choose to meaningfully change their behaviour.

To successfully drive down family violence rates, Tasmania needs diverse approaches for engaging people using violence across different age groups, cultural backgrounds, sexualities, and those with multiple and complex needs. For example, Men’s Behaviour Change Programs are highly effective at creating change for many men and families, but they do not, for example, suit people under the age of 18, men with alcohol and other drug issues, mental health problems, and/or cognitive impairment.

Making more diverse approaches available would involve developing and expanding options like community reintegration programs, therapeutic 1-1 counselling, case management, innovative group and online interventions, residential-based approaches, whole-of-family solutions, co-responder models, and Aboriginal healing-focused initiatives. For example, residential-based approaches can provide safe, accessible and affordable housing support to reduce risk for victim-survivors. Victim-survivors are too often forced to leave their home to escape family violence. In 2023-24, of the 104 women and 85 children supported by the Hobart Women’s Shelter, 57.4% were escaping family violence.⁵ Nationally, family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women, with 45% of all women and girls seeking homelessness assistance identifying family and domestic violence as a cause.⁶ Pressures from rising rents and consistently low rental availability in Tasmania compounds these housing challenges.⁷ If victim-survivors are unable to find housing and need to return home after escaping violence, this increases the level of violence they are subjected to.⁸

- **Funding proposal: \$2.96 million for No to Violence to establish and operate the Men’s Accommodation and Counselling Service in Tasmania**

Residential-based therapeutic interventions for people using violence offers an alternative option. They enable victim-survivors the choice to remain in their home and connected to their community. When temporary accommodation is tied to engagement with counselling and other supports, as well as partner contact work to affected family members, residential-based interventions can lead to meaningful behaviour change. Furthermore, insecure housing can be a barrier to a person using

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Who uses violence? <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/understanding-fdsv/who-uses-violence#:~:text=People%20who%20use%20violence%20is,age%2C%20sex%20or%20other%20characteristics>.

⁵ Hobart Women’s Shelter. (2024). 2023/2024 Annual Report. https://hobartws.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HWS_annualreport_2024_highres.pdf

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shs-annual-report-22-23/contents/clients-who-experienced-fdv>

⁷ Impact Economics and Policy (2023) Somewhere To Go: Meeting the Housing needs of women & children in Tasmania. <https://www.impacteconomics.com.au/impact/somewheretogo>

⁸ Lahav. (2022). Hyper-Sensitivity to the Perpetrator and the Likelihood of Returning to Abusive Relationships. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/08862605221092075>

violence attending, engaging with, and completing a behaviour change program.⁹ Evaluations of the MACS model in other states shows it fills an important service gap and delivers strengthened client outcomes (The Men's Accommodation and Counselling Service, Victoria).

Recommendation 2: Build a strong and sustainable family and sexual violence sector

Tasmania needs a strong, sustainable sector to reduce, and, ultimately, end family and sexual violence. While important steps have been made towards addressing family and sexual violence, more is needed. No to Violence supports the Alliance's calls for a comprehensive, long-term 10-Year Family and Sexual Violence Sector Workforce Strategy, closely aligned to state and Commonwealth policy frameworks. The strategy needs to centre the expertise of victim-survivors, including those working in the sector; identifying sector need; facilitating pathways into the sector; resourcing the future workforce; increasing the capability of broader workforces that intersect with family and sexual violence; and supporting research and evaluation.

- **Funding proposal: \$650,000 to establish a Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Sector Workforce Strategy.**

Current and predicted future workforce shortages are an enormous barrier to ending family and sexual violence in Tasmania, as well as a significant challenge to achieving commitments made by Tasmanian and Australian governments. A dedicated strategy focused on Tasmanian specialist services in family violence, sexual violence and child sexual abuse- across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing- will help ensure there is a well-qualified workforce in Tasmania's family and sexual violence sector and beyond.

A flexible, compassionate, and consistent Tasmanian specialist workforce is needed to ensure the success of all current and future policies and programs to address family violence and sexual violence. Instead, workforce shortages are placing significant strain on already limited resources, resulting in long waitlists for therapeutic counselling and case-management support, and reducing the sector's ability to achieve timely responses to family and sexual violence. These challenges make it difficult to recruit and retain workers, as well as negatively impacting the health, safety and wellbeing of the existing workforce.

Many individuals in Tasmania's specialist family and sexual violence sector are victim-survivors of family violence and sexual violence, including child sexual abuse. The sector is diverse, drawing on a wealth of knowledge from formal qualifications, lived experience, cultural knowledge, and practice-based expertise. However, despite their valuable contributions, these workers often face job insecurity, high demands, and low pay. This difficult work should be well remunerated, and workers should have safe working conditions.

⁹ Fitz-Gibbon, McGowan & Helps. (2024). Engaging in Change: A Victorian study of perpetrator program attrition and participant engagement in men's behaviour change programs. https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/Engaging_in_Change_A_Victorian_study_of_perpetrator_program_attrition_and_participant_engagement_in_men_s_behaviour_change_programs/26046856?file=48170518

It is crucial all family and sexual violence services are culturally safe. A specialist workforce strategy must create pathways for people from culturally and racially marginalised communities to enter and stay in the family violence workforce. By extension, it is crucial that a specialist workforce strategy not only fosters opportunities for First Nations people but also recognises and values their cultural expertise. This can be achieved through targeted programs such as grants, traineeships, and career development opportunities, as well as enhanced cultural safety practices within organisations. These efforts in line with Tasmania's commitment to First Nations self-determination, must be led by First Nations people and communities.

- **Funding Proposal: \$175,000 annual funding for a Tasmanian sector development role in NTV**

A dedicated sector development role in Tasmania would help enhance policy and practice initiatives and support the implementation of key frameworks and legislative reforms to develop the service infrastructure necessary to interrupt and, ultimately, end people's use of family violence. Successful implementation of these initiatives requires a coordinated, jurisdiction-wide, non-government specialist sector voice.

No to Violence is well-placed to support and further develop Tasmania's response to people using violence through our long track record of working with men using violence and experience developing essential frameworks and resources for the sector across Australia. We also have strong, established relationships with the federal government that could be leveraged by Tasmanian organisations working with people using violence to improve outcomes. This role would streamline engagement between the Tasmanian and federal governments and the Tasmanian family violence sector. And, working closely with the Alliance, this role would have a specific focus on strengthening and coordinating interventions for people using violence in Tasmania in the context of broader family violence sector reform.

- **Contract proposal: Implement 5-year contracts**

To build a strong, sustainable family and sexual violence sector, and interconnected with addressing workforce issues, Tasmania needs to further commit to longer-term funding. Short-term funding cycles and one-off funding measures result in short-term and unstable contracts for employees, creating job and career uncertainty. In turn, short-term funding makes it more difficult for family and sexual violence services to invest in professional development for workers to acquire specialist skills that meet the needs of victim-survivors and marginalised people and communities, including First Nations people, people from culturally and racially diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people and people with disabilities.

No to Violence welcomes *Survivors at the Centre's* commitment to a 37% increase in core funding for Tasmania's frontline family and sexual violence services, along with five-year contracts to provide funding certainty. This is a positive step, following advocacy by TasCOSS and our colleagues and members in the family and sexual violence sector. While the Government's commitment to five-year contracts is a step in the right direction, successful implementation requires oversight and transparency.

- **Contract proposal: Prioritise collaborative tendering processes**

A strong and sustainable sector would also benefit from prioritising collaborative, rather than competitive, tendering processes. Competitive processes foster unsustainable pricing and a "race to

the bottom" approach that undermines service quality and thwarts crucial sector collaboration efforts. Insecure, competitive funding arrangements further destabilise the sector, impacting recruitment, retention and staff well-being. For example, many practitioners report being under pressure to deliver more with less while facing job insecurity, low pay, and expectations to work without pay. These conditions hinder the ability to provide high-quality, trauma-informed, and culturally safe services. To ensure sustainable, effective service delivery, funding arrangements must cover the full cost of quality services and protect workers experience and care.