



DAILY LIFE

 [Print this article](#) |  [Close this window](#)

Abbott Government's cuts threaten to trap women in domestic violence

Jenna Price

Published: January 28, 2015 - 2:47PM

The Prime Minister for Women has the temerity to appear on national television today to say his government is committed to stopping violence against women.

Here are the facts: the money for one national program which supported 14 family violence prevention services has been entirely cut. The worst affected by those cuts are Indigenous women and children all over Australia. That group has the highest rate of family violence.

More? Community legal services all over Australia – cut and closing. Six million dollars to save lives all over the country. Gone and further cuts are rumoured.

And men's behaviour change programs in Victoria down to zero dollars. There are new rules as to where the money goes. Relationships Australia has been forced to reallocate money. That was a decision by Kevin Andrews, the former minister, who thought that advocacy on behalf of our most vulnerable was not relevant.

The Prime Minister repeated announcements already made - we all know there is a national action plan; we know there will be a national scheme for intervention orders. These were revealed months and years ago.

The one item revealed today was that domestic violence would once again be consigned to a dot point on a meeting – the Prime Minister has committed to putting the fight against domestic violence on the agenda for COAG.

COAG. All talk, no action. And the answers are easily at hand.

Community and legal groups welcome the federal government panel with Rosie Batty and Ken Lay. But here are serious problems which must be addressed.

Stop cutting money from services which succeed in preventing violence.

Tim Watts is a first time MP for Gellibrand. He went to a Men's Behaviour Change group last year to see what it was about. It's counselling to help men change the way they deal with anger.

When Watts looked outside the window during the counselling session, he could see the exact spot where Fiona Warzywoda, 33, was stabbed to death hours after she and her husband left Sunshine Magistrates' Court over an intervention order matter, on April 16 last year. A man has been charged with her murder.

Watts says there is a six-month wait to get counselling for these men. That's a long time to wait, particularly if you are the terrified partner or child of one of these men.

Why would any government cut funding for a service like that? Is it because those who run these services advocate on behalf of the country's most vulnerable?

How disgraceful that this government has tried to stop community workers from speaking out – and now it pretends to want to stop violence against women.

Now, the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (NFVPLS) has called on the federal government to back its commitment to the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, and to restore funding.

Antoinette Braybrook, the national convenor of NFVPLS, is desperate. She says the cuts have made a real and direct impact on women and children all over Australia and fears there will be yet another Andrea Pickett, another

Indigenous woman who cannot get the help she needs because there are no services to assist her. Andrea Pickett could not get family violence support because there were no city-based services which would deal with Indigenous women where she lived in Perth.

And Braybrook is mystified by the change in the Liberal and National Party – these services were funded first by the Howard Government and then by the Rudd and Gillard governments.

Why, she asks, have these services been abandoned by the Abbott government?

Tim Watts started Parliamentarians Against Family Violence. It's a cross party group and co-convenors are Andrew Broad, a National Party member for Mallee, and Ken Wyatt, the Indigenous MP from Hasluck. Nearly 40 people went to its first meeting in October last year.

The point of the group is to build knowledge and capacity. Sounds like the Prime Minister should drop in.

The Australian of the Year Rosie Batty said in her acceptance speech that we should increase investment in specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors. She said action is required to change the unacceptable and rising statistics, including a commitment to prevention and long-term secure funding for specialist services.

How is it that Rosie Batty knows this – and the Prime Minister's advisors don't?

This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/abbott-governments-cuts-threaten-to-trap-women-in-domestic-violence-20150128-12zzmr.html>