

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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I founded this charity five years ago at the beginning of COVID. It is an outreach service designed to help women in crisis with immediate and practical support. We operate in Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich and Gold Coast. We are also in Sydney and Western Sydney. 4 Voices helps people who are impacted by domestic and family violence, homeless and who might be socially or digitally disconnected. During COVID, our volunteers went out in vans which are outfitted with WiFi, phones, laptops, printers, and coffee/tea making facilities. We stood outside Centrelink. In parks. At refuges. We talked, listened, drank tea and coffee. We helped people download apps. Taught them how to report their income to Centrelink. We helped women secure food, crisis payments, shelter and jobs. Women who were struggling to get any help, waiting in queues, being interrogated, then rejected. Wait times for emergency payments, No affordable housing. But roll on 5 years and I've never seen domestic violence and female homelessness like this. Having fled violence, many women sleeping in parks. Cars. Tents. Many in hiding with their children. Still no affordable housing - it's actually worse now than in COVID. Women often unable to access money or get benefits from Centrelink. 70% of the women we support do not go to the police having fled violence. Many do not access services like legal aid, doctors, mental health practitioners, drug and alcohol rehab. Why? One word. Fear. Fear that the perpetrator will get more aggressive. Fear that they will be judged, evaluated, treated with suspicion. Interrogated and retraumatised. If not eligible for help, they will be spat out onto the street to fight for dignity and survival. Women face re-traumatisation when they go to one, then another, then another organisation who ask the same questions over and over again - any wonder these women won't cross the threshold of police stations, courthouses, the Department of Housing, DV charities, even if the help is for free. The whole system is terrifying. I want the stories from the frontline heard. We work in silos, without consultation, without collaboration. How can legislation be changed without a thorough analysis of the problems women face. Their fear of judgment, their reasons for not seeking help, their lack of understanding of domestic violence, never mind coercive control! How do we make it easier for women to get the support they need and stop women from being killed? Let's talk more about that.