



The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Social Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Minister.Rishworth@dss.gov.au

Date 27th August 2024

Dear Minister Rishworth

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE ONGONG WORK OF THE DOMESTIC FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMMISSION

Zonta International is a leading global organisation of individuals working together to build a better world for women and girls. Zonta International envisions a world in which women's rights are recognised as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential.

Zonta Australia provides a unified voice for Zonta in Australia on issues of national importance as they impact women and girls. It represents the three Zonta Districts in Australia. Each District represents many local clubs across the country.

- District 22 - Queensland, Northern Rivers NSW and a club in formation in PNG. 958 Members in 42 Clubs
- District 23 - Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, Victoria and Tasmania. 620 Members in 32 Clubs
- District 24 – New South Wales, (not the Northern Rivers section), Australian Capital Territory. 414 Members in 24 Clubs

Zonta Australia commends the work of the Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission and the recently released yearly report to Parliament by the Commissioner Ms Michaela Cronin. As the Commissioner rightly states, every life lost to violence is one too many and every person who lives with the ongoing impact of domestic, family or sexual violence requires all of us to strive to do better.

The statistics alone in 2023-24 highlight that 43 women were victims of intimate partner homicide, compared with 34 in 2022–23. These statistics tell a damning story but it is not the whole story and through Zonta clubs across Australia where our members are working with community groups, not for profit organisations and police, we know too well that the impact to people's lives goes much deeper.

We applaud the fact that Australia is only one of three countries in the world to have a Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission however we need to also ensure that it truly delivers on its role to monitor progress and hold governments accountable for the delivery of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children.

Zonta Australia notes the key findings outlined in the Report and it particularly notes these areas that it considers to be vital to real change to ultimately save women's lives:

- Better systems and use of data: the need for a more joined up approach to strengthen measures that relate to the system experience of people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence, particularly the experiences of priority communities and that all governments must ensure robust information sharing and good governance processes for co-design and decision making. There is too much siloed information, and we desperately need to see better systems that utilize data to keep women safe and to better enable frontline workers to do their job.
- The value and contribution of lived experience: lived experience expertise needs to be prioritised and valued by governments to ensure effective solutions for the people they serve.
- Engaging men: Men must be engaged with every aspect of ending violence, from better education of young men around respect for women especially in relation to coercive control and positive masculinity.
- Recognition that government needs to act and use the levers it has to mitigate the impacts of factors such as alcohol and other drugs, gambling, and pornography in promoting violence: these factors do not in themselves cause violence, there is strong evidence that they contribute to reducing inhibition and result in more serious violence.

In summary, Zonta Australia supports the Yearly Report and the full delivery of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children which also includes a First Nations National Plan to be delivered by June 2025.

We would welcome any opportunity to play a role in the ongoing roll out of the National Plan to End Violence and to support the work of the Commission and will be watching with great interest to see how it continues to keep government accountable so that we all see the outcome that we want to see – a better world for women and girls.

Yours sincerely



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Cc
Ms Michaela Cronin
Commissioner
Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission