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New family violence funding fails to meet demand

By Erin Handley and Melissa Cunningham Oct. 1, 2015, 12:34 p.m.

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Critical family violence prevention services have been overlooked in a recent funding windfall to end violence against women, a leading Ballarat advocate has said.

Women’s Health Grampians chief executive Marianne Hendron said while the federal government’s \$100 million safety package promises new technology – such as CCTV and GPS trackers – as well as training for health and legal workers, there was no investment into primary prevention of violence.

Ms Hendron said preventing violence from occurring stops the cycle of abuse in its tracks. However, she said a lack of recognition of the importance of prevention programs in shifting dangerous attitudes towards gender inequality and challenging social issues known to be triggers for family meant the area was overlooked.



THE VICIOUS CYCLE: An analysis of how family violence commonly unfolds and the sinister devices it employs.

END THE CYCLE **STOP** FAMILY VIOLENCE

“Prevention continues to be a hard area for the government because you don’t see the impact and outcomes of prevention work quickly,” she said. “When you are talking about cultural change, it’s long-term work which takes extensive education and investment to show evidence or results.”

Ms Hendron said funding for Women’s Health Grampians groundbreaking Act @Work program would run out in December.

Act@Work is aimed at helping organisations challenge sexism, discrimination and violence against women.

“It teaches people to be aware of the impacts of these behaviours and the costs of not taking action,” she said. “At one end you have you sexist jokes attitudes about women and major gender stereotypes and at one end of end is violence. We work to identify the direct correlation.”

Ms Hendron said there was also an urgent need for funding to pushed into “every curriculum”to educate children about respectful relationships in schools.

Centre for Non Violence chief executive Margaret Augerinos also said crisis centres and refuges remained in desperate need of funds.

“Investment in our frontline services is just not keeping pace with the demand,” Ms Augerinos said.

“We’re expected to see 30 times the number of women with one week’s resource - that’s the

reality.

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“There are so many women that we are not seeing because we just don't have capacity.”

While she said it was promising that crisis line 1800 RESPECT had been given \$5 million in the package, more needed to be done for life-saving shelters.

“At the end of the day they can only do so much over the phone. Women have to be referred into specialist supports and into refuges and if there's nowhere for them to go if we don't have capacity, then that's a huge risk,” she said.