

Tasmania is one of Australia's safest places to live. Unless you are a woman or a child.

Family and sexual violence leaders say the state's "nation-leading reputation" no longer matches the evidence, calling for urgent whole-of-system reform and investment.

Tasmania has Australia's highest rates of intimate partner violence, emotional and economic abuse, stalking and child maltreatment notifications, alongside some of the nation's highest rates of sexual violence, poverty and housing stress.

Despite these realities, Tasmania has the second lowest per capita investment in specialist family and sexual violence services of any Australian jurisdiction. A 2024-25 analysis of state budgets indicated Tasmania's investment equating to \$25.96 per capita, the next lowest investment was Western Australia, at \$42.85.ⁱ

No government can continue claiming family and sexual violence is a priority while investing less than almost every other Australian jurisdiction in responding to it.

The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance CEO Bree Klerck said: "For years, Tasmanians have been told by our government that our state has a nation-leading response to family and sexual violence. We don't."

"Tasmania has normalised a level of family and sexual violence that would be considered a state emergency in any other public policy area. Yet we continue to invest less in specialist responses than almost every other Australian jurisdiction."

This year alone, more than 40 Australian women have been killed by men's violence – 4 in Tasmania. Sympathy and condolences from government officials' matter, and they have been given. But sympathy without action does not make women and children safer. What Tasmania needs now is action.

The women whose deaths make headlines are only the visible tip of a much larger crisis. Thousands more women and children live every day wondering if they will be next. They live with threats to kill, coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, stalking, rape and sexual coercion, and intimidation. They calculate escape routes, monitor moods and wonder each night whether everyone in the house will still be alive tomorrow.

If Tasmania is serious about preventing domestic homicide, we must acknowledge the invisible population of women and children living every day with that terror, long before it becomes a police matter.

For too many women, the greatest barrier to leaving is finding somewhere safe to go. Tasmania's housing crisis has become one of the most significant family violence issues facing our state.

Housing is no longer a separate policy issue. Housing policy is family violence policy.

Every woman who remains with a violent partner because she has nowhere safe to go is not choosing violence. Every day a woman stays because there is no refuge bed, no affordable rental or no long-term housing option is another day our housing system has become part of the family violence response. Every young person forced to couch surf or rely on unsafe places and unsafe people because home is not safe is another consequence of a housing system that is failing victim-survivors.

No woman should have to choose between violence, homelessness or losing her children. No young person should have to choose between an unsafe home and an unsafe place to sleep.

Aboriginal women experience family violence at disproportionately high rates, yet Tasmania still has no state-funded Aboriginal-led specialist family and sexual violence service. Leaving violence can also mean leaving Country, family, community and culture, while the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and child removal continue to shape help-seeking and trust in systems. A whole-of-system response must include Aboriginal-led prevention, healing and specialist services.

The Alliance's recent victim-survivor survey found that more than 40% of survivors did not report their experience to police. That means Tasmania's coordinated government response is inaccessible to a significant number of women and children experiencing violence because the system was never built to reach them.

Ms Klerck said: “We recognise the recent FSV Action Plan evaluation, the Safe at Home audit and the Family Violence Act reform now underway. But until we have a genuine whole-of-system conversation - and act on what's been raised for years - we won't see women and children safer in Tasmania.”

The Alliance is calling for the government to prioritise family and sexual violence and to commit to an inquiry. This will provide an opportunity to examine whether Tasmania's investment, legislation and service system reflect contemporary evidence and the scale of the crisis, and to have an overdue, whole of system conversation.

We already know what works. We know that prevention works, housing matters, coordinated services save lives, recovery requires long-term support and Aboriginal-led services are vital.

Tasmania has the knowledge, but we lack urgency, leadership, and political commitment. Tasmanian women and children should not have to wait for another tragedy before we decide that enough is enough. We know what works. The question is whether we are prepared to act.

ⁱ Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance, 2025. Submission to: Tasmanian Parliament Commission of Inquiry Recommendations Scrutiny Joint Sessional Committee:
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