

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Written Questions from Senator Siewert - Question 1

Question reference number: SQ20-000476

Senator: Rachel Siewert

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 26 June 2020

Question:

There has been concern expressed about potential increases for First Nations women and children experiencing domestic violence in regional and remote communities and the limited capacity to respond. In some communities the complications around cross border travel also make it difficult either to escape the violence or return to a community.

Has the Department been monitoring instances of domestic and family violence in regional and remote communities? If so, has there been an increase? What specific additional supports are available to support First Nations women and children subject to domestic and family violence?

Answer:

The Department of Social Services has been monitoring the impact of the coronavirus pandemic nationally on domestic and family violence through the Women's Safety Council (the Council) and its senior officials groups. These groups have been meeting regularly during the coronavirus pandemic to discuss the impact on service providers, which has included reports of an increase in service demand and complexity during this period.

The Council acknowledged, in its Communique from 30 March and 2 April 2020, that the impacts of COVID-19 disproportionately affect many women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability and women living in regional and remote areas. The full Communique is available at <https://pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/communique-mar-apr-2020-coag-womens-safety-council.pdf>

The National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses is providing \$130 million from the Commonwealth's \$150 million Domestic Violence Support Package to states and territories to bolster family, domestic and sexual violence supports to respond to expected increases in demand resulting from COVID-19. Funding already allocated has been largely on a per-capita basis with a loading for remote populations given the additional costs and complexity with supporting remote communities.