

Full Stop Australia
2025–2026 Pre-Budget Submission

Support
1800 FULL STOP.

1800 FULL STOP provides free, trauma-specialist counselling to anyone in Australia impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence

 1800 385 578

 fullstop.org.au

**Full
Stop**
Australia



My Country - Women's Ceremony by Bundjalung and Gomeri/Euahlayi artist, Lee Anne Hall

Full Stop Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past and present. We acknowledge the harms caused by colonisation, the

disproportionate number of First Nations people affected by sexual, domestic and family violence, and the far-reaching effects of that violence.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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About Full Stop Australia

Full Stop Australia (formerly Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia) was established as Australia's first sexual assault service in 1974. We have been providing trauma and violence-informed specialist counselling and care navigation services to people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence for over 50 years.

Full Stop Australia aims to put a full stop to sexual, domestic and family violence through education, advocacy and training. Our work includes:

- ▶ 24/7 confidential telephone, online and face-to-face counselling to people of all genders who have experienced sexual, domestic and family violence, and specialist help for their supporters and those experiencing vicarious trauma.
- ▶ Best practice training and consulting to shape attitudes about violence and equip people across the community to support victim-survivors. We offer training and professional services to frontline

workers, governments, universities and the corporate and not-for-profit sectors.

- ▶ Advocate to governments and in the media for laws and systems that better respond to, and ultimately prevent, sexual, domestic and family violence.

As one of the few sexual, domestic and family violence services providing care across the continuum, Full Stop Australia's work supports each of the four priority pillars in the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032—primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. As a National Plan Advisory Group member, Full Stop Australia actively contributes to ensuring National Plan objectives are met.

Pre Budget Submission: Executive summary

Sexual, domestic and family violence in Australia is a national emergency. In recent years, we have seen a spike in domestic and family violence-related homicides and an alarming rise in reported sexual assaults, now at a 31-year high.¹ This situation highlights the urgent need for immediate and effective action.

1800 FULL STOP is a national 24/7 specialist trauma counselling service delivered by Full Stop Australia, which plays a vital and unique role within the support landscape for sexual, domestic and family violence. Unlike many

helplines, **1800 FULL STOP offers direct access to trauma-specialist counsellors**, aiding victim-survivors from crisis intervention to medium- and long-term recovery. Additionally, 1800 FULL STOP provides crucial **support to family and community members**. The service also delivers essential **clinical support, debriefing and vicarious trauma management** to health and community services professionals, enhancing their ability to support victim-survivors.

When other support systems cannot meet demand, **1800 FULL STOP helps bridge the gap.**

INVESTING

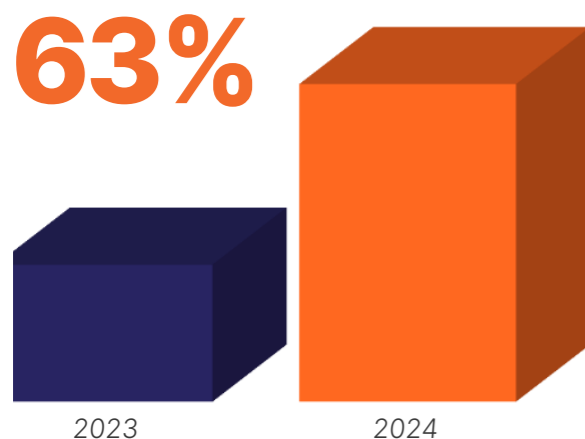
\$500,000 annually for three years

would enable us to keep our essential 24/7 trauma-specialist counselling and response service open to victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence nationwide.

We urgently need funding to continue providing trauma-specialist counselling to people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence across Australia. Securing this funding ensures that victim-survivors receive the comprehensive care they need to recover.

There is consistent and growing demand for 1800 FULL STOP.

From 2023 to the end of 2024, demand for the service grew by



A significant number of service users are referred to us by other government funded Helplines, including 1800 RESPECT.

Full Stop Australia continues to operate our 1800 FULL STOP service, despite it having no dedicated source of funding. We rely on community and philanthropic donations to remain operational.

Funding uncertainty and growing demand year on year may result in us having to withdraw this critical service.

The unique model of care provided by 1800 FULL STOP is recognised across the mental health and domestic, family and sexual violence sectors. Organisations such as 1800 RESPECT actively refer cases which require out specialist, high quality trauma informed response to meet complex client presentations. In June – December 2024, we received 320 referrals directly from 1800 RESPECT (as identified by our clients) with many more informal referrals from this and other Helplines, of people who would otherwise fall through the gaps in an overburdened and complex service system.

It is clear that demand is growing in our sector and our specialist service is desperately needed.

When you call Full Stop Australia and you talk about real things, they know just what to do and how to handle it. You guys are the gold standard in counselling and support. I don't know what we would do without you

March 2024

What is 1800 FULL STOP?

1800 FULL STOP is a free, national service that provides direct access to professional trauma-specialist counsellors for individuals of all ages and genders impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence. We work across the continuum, from crisis response to medium- and long-term recovery and healing.

1800 FULL STOP is a unique, trauma-specialist healing and recovery service for victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence

Our service delivery is built on a strong therapeutic alliance between clinicians and clients, and ensures continuity of care, minimising the need for clients to repeatedly recount traumatic experiences. 1800 FULL STOP provides the following service features:

- ▶ **24/7 Trauma Specialist Counselling:** Available via webchat and telephone, ensuring continuous support at any time. We provide specialised support and deep knowledge of recovery and healing of complex trauma.
- ▶ **Risk and Safety Planning:** We implement strategies to identify, assess, and mitigate risks associated with experiences of sexual, domestic and family violence, including risk assessment, safety planning and child protection.

- ▶ **Therapeutic Recovery Goals and Plans:** We develop and work with clients on personalised therapeutic recovery goals.
- ▶ **Interim Care Provision:** We offer interim care for clients on waiting lists, those ineligible for mainstream services, or those experiencing service gaps due to planned or unplanned leave and other disruptions.
- ▶ **End-to-End Care Coordination:** We support clients from the point of immediate crisis to managing long-term trauma impacts, enhancing overall wellbeing and recovery.
- ▶ **Referral and Service Linking:** We collaborate with various support providers to help clients access appropriate services.
- ▶ **Workforce Vicarious Trauma Support:** We provide specialised support for professionals in the health, mental health, legal, law enforcement, and media sectors to address vicarious trauma.

Over 50 years of service, we have established a robust foundation for the specialist counselling we provide victim-survivors. Our approach is built on the following key features:

- ▶ **Strength and empowerment:** We focus on empowering survivors, helping them to regain control and rebuild their lives.
- ▶ **Recovery-oriented:** Our services support long-term recovery, within the framework of a phased approach, addressing immediate and ongoing needs.
- ▶ **Culturally responsive and intersectional:** We ensure our services are culturally responsive, recognising and centring the diverse backgrounds of our clients.
- ▶ **Trauma specialist:** Our approach is grounded in understanding trauma and its impacts, providing specialist care that addresses complex trauma comprehensively.

Our counsellors are highly qualified, with at least a four-year degree in social work, psychology or equivalent, and three or more years' experience in the field of sexual, domestic and family violence

Counsellors receive intensive orientation, structured clinical supervision, ongoing training and professional development, and sector-leading vicarious trauma support.

1800 FULL STOP is a critical part of the health and women's safety ecosystem, meeting demand that cannot be met elsewhere

1800 FULL STOP is vital for those who lack access to local counselling services, have privacy concerns, or cannot afford trauma-specialist therapeutic support. It is able to meet acute gaps in regional, rural, and remote areas.

1800 FULL STOP is also a critical support for people with complex trauma that require ongoing support. 1800 FULL STOP complements an overburdened and undersupplied mental health system, which has limited capacity to address complex trauma related to sexual, domestic, and family violence. Despite the prevalence and significant impacts of complex trauma, specialist recovery services are scarce. Existing services for those affected by sexual, domestic and family violence often focus solely on crises or isolated incidents, rather than providing comprehensive and holistic care.²

While addressing isolated concerns may offer immediate relief, it often fails to address underlying issues.

Growing demand and serious gaps in health and women's safety service systems leads to many federal government funded services, including organisations such as 1800 RESPECT, referring calls to us. In 2024, we received 320 formal referrals from 1800 RESPECT, and an even higher number of informal referrals.³

The clients referred generally had complex trauma and ongoing mental health support needs.

1800 FULL STOP plays an essential and complementary role to other services in the sexual, domestic and family violence and mental health support landscape.

- ▶ **Frontline Services:** These services provide immediate crisis and short-term practical support, including referrals and limited counselling. 1800 FULL STOP enhances these efforts by offering continuous, long-term trauma-specialist counselling and support.
- ▶ **1800 RESPECT:** While 1800 RESPECT experiences high demand and primarily functions as a triage and referral management system with limited counselling capacity, 1800 FULL STOP provides more extensive counselling services and continuous care, filling capacity constraint gaps.
- ▶ **Mental Health System:** The mental health system offers face-to-face and limited telehealth appointments,

often limited by availability and long waitlists. These services are not always sexual, domestic and family violence specialists or available 24/7. Private mental health providers are expensive and inaccessible for many survivors. 1800 FULL STOP complements these services by providing round-the-clock, specialised support, bridging the accessibility and expertise gaps.

- ▶ **Suicide Prevention Helplines:** These helplines provide short-term, general mental health and suicide prevention support, often staffed by a mix of volunteers and clinical professionals not specialised in sexual, domestic and family violence. 1800 FULL STOP fills this significant gap by offering specialised, long-term, trauma-specialist counselling specifically for sexual, domestic and family violence

Everyone I speak to at Full Stop is just amazing. You don't normally get that. You might get one or two good people at an organisation, but it is not like that at Full Stop. It is like every person is handpicked to provide support to people like me

May 2024

1800 FULL STOP

Specialist 24/7 service

Free, trauma and violence informed trauma-specialist care

End-to-end care coordination from the crisis point through to recovery

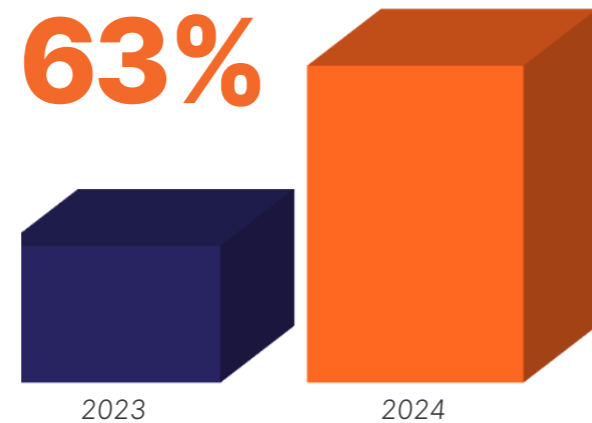
| Frontline Services | 1800 RESPECT | Mental Health Systems | Suicide Prevention Helplines |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Crisis and short term ▶ Practical support focus ▶ Referrals ▶ Limited availability ▶ Non-ongoing counselling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High demand ▶ Triage ▶ Referral management ▶ Limited ongoing counselling capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ F2F/Telehealth ▶ Appointment-based ▶ Long waitlists ▶ Limited availability ▶ Not always SDFV trauma specific ▶ Not always 24/7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Short term crisis support ▶ Generalised mix MH/SP support ▶ Mix of volunteer/clinical ▶ Not specialised in SDFV |

Demand for 1800 FULL STOP is significant and growing.

1800 FULL STOP provides thousands of occasions of service (clinical or crisis support) each year. In 2024, Full Stop Australia provided 3,133 occasions of service through 1800 FULL STOP—up from 2,743 occasions of service in 2023.

And demand for 1800 FULL STOP is on the rise. A significant number of service users are referred to us by other government funded Helplines, including 1800 RESPECT.

From 2023 to the end of 2024, demand for the service grew by



What investment to 1800 FULL STOP means

Investing in 1800 FULL STOP would reduce downstream burden on the economy

The impacts of trauma related to sexual, domestic and family violence victimisation can be lifelong and profoundly impact survivors' ability to engage in day-to-day activities.

In 2015-2016, estimates of the financial burden to the Australian economy from intimate partner violence was over ⁴

\$22 billion

An investment in 1800 FULL STOP is an investment in a service with a track record of supporting victim-survivors, thereby reducing downstream burden on the economy.

More broadly, this violence impacts the community, placing significant strain on:

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Families | Workplaces |
| Justice Systems | Health Systems |
| Social support systems | The economy |

INVESTING

\$500,000 annually for three years

would enable us to keep our essential 24/7 trauma-specialist counselling and response service open to victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence nationwide.

Investing in 1800 FULL STOP would support the government's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children

Investing in 1800 FULL STOP would support the following objectives under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032:

- ▶ **Recovery objective 1 (ensure victim-survivors are well supported through trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible services that support long-term recovery).** An investment in 1800 FULL STOP is an investment in trauma-informed care and long-term recovery. 1800 FULL STOP offers a unique service that meets medium- and long-term recovery needs, fills gaps in the broader mental health system and complements the service offered by 1800RESPECT.
- ▶ **Recovery objective 3 (ensure everyone impacted by sexual violence receives specialist recovery and healing services).** The requested investment in 1800 FULL STOP would help ensure access to healing and recovery services is not cut back. Closure of 1800 FULL STOP would result in thousands of victim-survivors being turned away from receiving support with healing and recovery.

Many of those victim-survivors would be unable to access support elsewhere—due to cost, the complexity of their need, their location, or because they don't feel safe contacting other services.

Investing in 1800 FULL STOP would also support Action 4 of the government's First Action Plan 2023-2027 under the National Plan—to “build the capacity of services and systems that support victim-survivors to provide trauma-informed, connected and coordinated responses that support long-term recovery, health and wellbeing.”

Investment in 1800 FULL STOP would support other government strategies and plans that aim to improve outcomes for a range of diverse communities—such as Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

We know that sexual, domestic and family violence disproportionately impacts women at risk of homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, people with disabilities, women on temporary or refugee visas, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and that these groups can experience additional barriers to seeking support. Funding 1800 FULL STOP is an investment in ensuring priority populations have timely access to healing and recovery support.

What we need to keep answering calls

An investment of \$500,000 annually for three years would enable us to keep our service running, so we can respond to the many referrals from government funded organisations and requests for help 24/7, 365 days a year, across the country.

This investment would ensure the safety and recovery of victim-survivors, while reducing burden on health and social service systems.

1800 FULL STOP plays a crucial role in the health and women's safety ecosystem. There are substantial gaps and shortfalls in sexual, domestic and family violence trauma-specialist counselling services nationally. These gaps are even more pronounced in regional, rural and remote areas across Australia.

1800 FULL STOP is a lifesaving service, which delivers immense impact to victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence across the country. The service supports victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence who cannot get their needs met elsewhere, with demand on the rise.

Without support from the Federal Government to continue delivering 1800 FULL STOP, the service is at risk of closure. This would mean turning away thousands of survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence who badly need help.

Referring Services Testimonials

Private Trauma Specialist Counsellor

Our clinic tries to ensure that the agencies/organisations/clinicians we refer our clients to are of the highest level and easily accessible.

Our clients, at times, require between session-support and are informed that Full Stop staff have a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of abuse and impacts of trauma. Clients are also informed that the Full Stop service is not staffed by volunteers but by professionals in the trauma space

Helpline Referral

Full Stop is the gold standard service for women (sexual violence referral)

January 2025

Government Health Professional Specialising in Sexual Violence

I think the benefit of this particular helpline is that some clients who are repeat callers have a process of continuation with a service.

I understand some of them may have a care plan/further note on the system that assists counsellors to better support them. I have had clients also who may be too distressed to leave the home, and telephone crisis support may be a soft entry into face-to-face counselling in the future.

Also, clients have provided feedback that they felt safe contacting 1800 FULL STOP as the organisation openly advocates in public spaces for victim-survivors and the organisation's stance against violence is well known

References

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). Recorded Crime - Victims. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-victims/2023>.
- 2 Wall, L., & Quadara, A. (2014). Acknowledging complexity in the impacts of sexual victimisation trauma. Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault. Canberra: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- 3 For example, an informal referral might occur where 1800 RESPECT tells a client to call 1800 FULL STOP, rather than providing a warm referral directly.
- 4 KPMG. (2016). The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia. Available at: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_final_report_may_2016.pdf.

**A LIFE
FREE FROM
VIOLENCE
IS POSSIBLE.**

Contact

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