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Women's Sector call on Nations Leaders at COAG: Violence is Preventable

Australian women's organisations have signed a joint open letter to the Prime Minister calling for stepped up funding and leadership to address the root cause of violence against women, gender inequality.

The media reports that, this year alone, 31 women in Australia have died as a result of gendered violence, amongst those the tragic deaths of Stephanie Scott in Leeton, Sabah Al-Mdwali and Tara Costigan in Canberra and Masa Vukotic in Melbourne.

"Where we used to talk about the death of 'one women a week', tragically the figures are now closer to two women. Violence against women is a national emergency that requires urgent responses from the leader of our nation," said Dr Caroline Lambert, CEO of YWCA Australia.

The call, from 62 organisations, comes ahead of Friday's COAG meeting, where the agenda will address the problem of violence against women at a national level.

"It is vital that, at a time when we have unprecedented strategic alignment of political and cultural will to end violence against women, that the political leadership of our country puts the dollars behind initiatives that will end this scourge," said Dr Lambert.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children (National Plan), which has bipartisan support, recognises that a holistic approach to ending violence against women is needed; a strategic approach that encompasses both primary prevention and specialist frontline services.

Robust, long-term and adequate resourcing of women's specialist violence and related services (including health, counselling, housing and legal services) will enable better outcomes for women who present in crisis and with complex needs.

The 62 signatories also call on the Australian Government to reconsider the allocation of a \$30 million awareness-raising campaign to ensure that primary violence prevention programming is embedded within primary and secondary schools.

"The call for allocation of funds to primary prevention and early intervention mechanisms, should not come at the expense of frontline services, as there is currently unprecedented demand for services.

"The Australian community's awareness of violence against women has grown significantly as a result of previous government initiatives. Now is the time to work on the root causes and raise a generation of children and young people who respect each other, regardless of gender, and for whom violence against women is unthinkable," said Dr Lambert.

- **Ends** -

The following spokespeople are available for interview:

- Dr Caroline Lambert, Executive Officer, YWCA Australia - 0422 598 008
- Fiona McCormack, CEO Domestic Violence Victoria - 0409 937 800