



The Sydney Feminists Inc.

4 October 2017

To the Committee Secretariat,

My name is Tessa Barratt and I'm a constituent from the Blue Mountains. I am also the Public Officer for The Sydney Feminists Incorporated, an educational not-for-profit.

It is with great sadness that my colleagues and I have been following R&DVSA's difficulties with Medibank and the decision to withdraw. We completely understand, support and applaud their decision and wish them every success in sustaining themselves as an independent service.

I'm concerned that the 70 dedicated Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia workers who are being made redundant as a consequence will not receive their redundancy entitlements. Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia may have to close down if the Government does not fund these payments.

I support the Government taking responsibility for funding for these redundancy payments, as they have done in the past.

As I am sure you are aware, last week NSW saw a horrific amount of domestic violence, bringing the death toll of women this year to 38. (You can read more about it here: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/horror-week-of-domestic-violence-in-nsw-20170930-gyrtqu.html>) To quote Jenna Price of the Counting Dead Women project, (a wing of feminist campaign Destroy the Joint): ""I would say we have serious problems with a [lack of] funding ... the federal government has not funded community legal centres to the extent they need to be."" Services like Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia are desperately needed, and it is imperative they receive the funding they now need in order to keep operational.

While our primary focus is education, The Sydney Feminists is, sadly, regularly contacted by women facing abuse, harassment, assault and stalking. We have continuously referred these frightened women to R&DVSA precisely because we know they will receive the best quality care. The people who work at R&DVSA are both highly professional and deeply compassionate and understanding, and it is this combined approach that has made them such an excellent service. That they want to maintain their ethical standards and quality treatment is completely understandable. People suffering rape or domestic violence are exceptionally vulnerable and need the best possible care, which R&DVSA can deliver.

I believe this important issue needs to be escalated to the office of Christian Porter.

Thank you for your time.

Yours faithfully,
Tessa Barratt