MEDIA RELEASE

John Robertson MP
NSW Opposition Leader

Sophie Cotsis MLC
Shadow Minister for Women

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MIKE BAIRD URGED TO KEEP FUNDING WOMEN’S REFUGES

NSW Opposition Leader John Robertson said the Baird Liberal Government’s likely intention to close down specialist women’s refuges was a travesty that would undermine positive work being done in helping women who are the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child sexual abuse.

The issue of women’s refuges was one of the topics of discussion at NSW Labor’s Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Roundtable held at the NSW Parliament earlier today.

“Women’s refuges have been providing shelter to women and girls for the last 40 years and during that time not one of them has had their funding threatened, but for some reason this Liberal Government thinks they should be closed down,” John Robertson said.

“The Baird Liberal Government’s threat to cut funding to women’s refuges is baffling and dangerous, particularly when Mike Baird said one of his commitments was to protect the vulnerable in our communities.

“I’m calling for Mike Baird to demonstrate his support for the specialist homelessness services by continuing to fund these women’s refuges.”

Shadow Minister for Women Sophie Cotsis said: “The latest crime figures released yesterday show domestic violence has increased by 2.5 per cent and indecent assault and sexual offences have gone up by 12 per cent. Girls aged 17 years or under make up 84 per cent of the increase in victims of sexual offences.”

“Domestic violence and sexual assault are issues that need to be placed front and centre of the public policy agenda and I’m pleased that we’ve been joined today by experts and passionate advocates that are working hard to see an end to these horrendous attacks on women.”

A spokeswoman for SOS Women’s services, Kate Timmins, said the campaign to keep the refuges open was growing by the day.

“We welcome the support of Opposition leader John Robertson, Shadow Ministers and Labor MPs who understand just how critical these services are,” said Kate Timmins.

“Hospitals like St Vincent’s and the Sydney Central GP Network have urged the Government to keep the refuges open, if not, hospitals will face more pressure on their emergency departments and doctors will have nowhere to transfer patients.

“If the Government isn't listening to some of our most senior health professionals, just where are they getting their advice from?

“It’s time we heard from the Premier on this important community issue,” Ms Timmins said.

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