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MEDIA RELEASE

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LIBERALS CUT OFF 60 HOMELESSNESS SERVICES INCLUDING WOMEN’S REFUGES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

The NSW Opposition today has slammed the Baird Liberal Government for its decision to defund 60 specialist homelessness providers including women’s refuges that will have to close their doors from the end of the month.

“Mike Baird had the audacity to stand up on Tuesday and say that he wants to help vulnerable people, yet before the week is out, he is cutting off critical funding for women’s refuges that help some of the most vulnerable in our communities – women and children escaping domestic violence and sexual assault,” Shadow Family and Community Services Minister Linda Burney said.

“I am disgusted by the Liberals’ announcement today. Stopping domestic violence and women’s homelessness has to be a bigger priority in our communities but the government’s decision will undermine the hard work of women’s groups and advocates.

“These women’s refuges have helped 40,000 women over the past two decades – that will no longer happen.

“The political fix the Liberals announced today is nothing more than a blatant attempt at hush money to get the Liberals past the election – but it won’t even make it that far with 60 specialist homelessness services closing their doors from 30 June.
“The $8.6 million announced today will not go towards helping these organisations keep their doors open, it will be going to the successful tenders.

“The reality for these 60 specialist homelessness refuges is that they don’t have the time or the resources for another tender process that will take months before they know if they are successful for funding.

“The Liberals, in many cases, as part of the new tender process, have given the buildings that these organisations are currently occupying to other successful tenderers – meaning very simply that these organisations are now homeless themselves and will be unable to provide services any longer.

“Defunding these 60 specialist refuges is going to make women less safe. The women’s services that have been defunded were specialist; the services being funded in many cases are generalist.

“I can tell you that if you have been brutalised, raped and beaten for 15 years you are not going to go into a generalist service.

“Women should feel safe in their homes. The reality regrettably remains that many are not, and under those circumstances we must provide the support and a safe environment that they can access to escape violent homes.

Shadow Minister for Women Sophie Cotsis said: “This announcement of cutting off funding to women’s refuges comes at the same time that the most recent crime statistics shows a 2.5% increase in domestic violence – an increase that sadly is not the result of women having the confidence to speak out but an increase in the number of women presenting to hospital with serious injuries as a result of this violence.”

“Domestic violence is a scourge in our communities. The government has today turned its back on women who feel powerless and require a great deal of courage to leave their homes – today’s decision will not help them.

“One woman in Australia is the victim of domestic homicide every week – that is a horrid statistic for a nation like Australia to have.

“Domestic violence appears to be very much part of our culture and we all have a responsibility to stop it.