COMMUNITY OPPOSITION TO LIBERALS’ CRUEL REFORMS TO WOMEN’S SHELTERS REACHES PARLIAMENT

The NSW Labor Opposition has today received a petition signed by over 14,000 community members opposed to the Liberal Government’s controversial Going Home, Staying Home changes – a program that has seen specialist services for women cut across the state.

The petition, presented by SOS Women’s Services to Opposition Leader John Robertson on the steps of NSW Parliament, will be tabled in Parliament and force a debate on the issue.

Under the Liberal Government’s Going Home, Staying Home reforms, funding has been redirected away from specialist shelters for women fleeing from domestic or sexual violence and into generalist services for men and women.

Under the new funding arrangements from the Liberals, over 80 specialist providers across the state have not had their funding renewed.

“A key role of government is to protect the most vulnerable in our society – and specialist women’s services have been providing important support for 40 years,” Opposition Leader John Robertson said.

“But under the Liberals, funding has been redirected to generalist shelters that often house men and women together, regardless of whether that’s appropriate for the individual.

“Often these shelters simply do not provide the specialist services women and children fleeing domestic violence so desperately need.

“The petition we’ve received today is just more evidence that the community is extremely concerned about these changes from the Liberal Government – a huge step backwards for women escaping sexual assault and domestic violence.”

Deputy Opposition Leader Linda Burney said: “Over the past weeks, we’ve met with staff and clients at specialist services facing funding cuts – and it’s clear that these unprecedented changes are hitting hard right across the state.

“Let’s be clear: some of these specialist services have remained open in name only, but offer very different support services, all as a result of this government’s flawed tender process.

“Many women will be cut off from vital escape routes, forced into a generalist system that is already bursting at the seams.”

Shadow Minister for Women Sophie Cotsis said: “Sadly, domestic violence is on the rise, making these hasty and unconscionable funding cuts all the more appalling.

“We know that staff and women seeking refuge have been living week to week under this confusing new tender process – with stop-gap funding measures that have failed to offer any certainty.
“It’s time for the Liberals to come clean about this botched process and debate the issue in Parliament.”

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