

21 July 2026

The Hon Jodie Harrison MP
Minister for Women
Minister for Seniors
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Dear Minister Harrison,

Re: Domestic and Family Violence Services - unmet need and demand in South West Sydney and the City of Sydney

Thank you for your letter to the sector regarding the FY27 NSW Budget, and for the NSW Government's announcement of an additional \$184.1 million in core funding for specialist domestic and family violence programs, including \$54.0 million for Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) and the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service (IDFVS) and \$76.1 million for the Safer Pathway program, which includes Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS). On behalf of the women, children and staff of Justice Support Centre (JSC), thank you for listening to the sector's advocacy and recognising the pressure our services are under.

Your letter confirms that the new uplift funding will be “targeted based on unmet need and demand”, rather than applied as a flat increase to every provider. We provide strong evidence below that the areas covered by the JSC in South West Sydney and the City of Sydney should be prioritised in awarding funding to recognise both significant exponential growth in demand and the areas of unmet need.

Southwest Sydney: a region under sustained demographic pressure

Southwest Sydney continues to be one of the fastest growing and most disadvantaged regions in New South Wales. JSC's core WDVCAS, SHLV and IDFVS catchment – Fairfield, Liverpool and Canterbury-Bankstown – is home to more than 800,000 people, and each of these three council areas ranks among the most disadvantaged in NSW on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2021 Census Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA):

- **Fairfield** was recorded as the most disadvantaged LGA in NSW and the second-most disadvantaged in Greater Sydney nationally on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) – ranked 63rd lowest of 547 LGAs across Australia. Fairfield was also the least advantaged LGA in Greater Sydney on the Index of Education and Occupation, and among the four LGAs in Greater Sydney with the least access to economic resources.
- **Liverpool and Canterbury-Bankstown** both rank in the bottom half of LGAs nationally on the IRSAD (341st and 333rd of 547 LGAs respectively), despite Canterbury-Bankstown being the largest LGA in Greater Western Sydney, with 371,006 residents.
- **Liverpool** is also one of the five fastest-growing LGAs in NSW by absolute population increase (ABS Regional Population, 2023–24), meaning demand in our catchment is continuing to rise well beyond what the 2021 Census captured.



These rankings translate directly into the barriers our clients face daily:

- **Income and employment:** Median personal weekly income in Fairfield is \$485 – barely 60% of the NSW median of \$813. Canterbury-Bankstown (\$625) and Liverpool (\$694) also sit well below the state median, and unemployment in Fairfield (8.7%) is nearly double the NSW rate (4.9%).
- **Education:** Only 13.3% of Fairfield residents hold a Bachelor degree or above, against 27.8% across NSW, and 7.4% report no educational attainment at all, seven times the NSW rate of 1.0%.
- **Language:** 79% of Fairfield households, 68% of Canterbury-Bankstown households and 64% of Liverpool households use a language other than English at home, compared with 30% across NSW. Fairfield's largest language groups are Vietnamese (21%), Arabic (9%) and Assyrian Neo-Aramaic (8%); Canterbury-Bankstown's are Arabic (17%), Vietnamese (8%) and Mandarin (5%); Liverpool's are Arabic (13%), Vietnamese (5%) and Hindi (3%).

Low income, low educational attainment and limited English proficiency are well-established, compounding barriers to disclosing violence and accessing support – and they sit on top of, rather than instead of, the underlying rates of domestic and family violence in our community. This is the lived reality behind the numbers in JSC's 2025 Annual Report.

A different but equally acute pressure profile: the City of Sydney and our Sydney WDVCS

The City of Sydney LGA presents a different but equally acute profile of vulnerability, again borne out in ABS data:

- **Rapid growth and density:** The City of Sydney was the fastest-growing LGA in NSW in 2022–23, adding 12,811 people in a single year – growth of 5.9% (ABS Regional Population, 2022–23 financial year). Almost four in five dwellings (78.5%) are flats or apartments, and average household size is just 1.9 people, the smallest of any LGA in JSC's combined catchment.
- **Housing insecurity:** 64.1% of City of Sydney households rent – more than double the NSW rate of 32.6% – and only 14.1% own their home outright. Median weekly rent (\$550) and median monthly mortgage repayments (\$2,700) are the highest of any LGA referenced in this letter. This directly constrains the practical housing options available to women seeking to remain safely in their own home, or to secure alternative accommodation, after experiencing violence.
- **Hidden economic vulnerability:** despite a high median household income (\$2,212 per week), the City of Sydney sits in the second-lowest decile in Australia (decile 2) on the ABS Index of Economic Resources – the same decile as Fairfield – reflecting how far high housing costs erode the economic security that headline income figures suggest.
- **Family and household structure:** 41.1% of households are single-person households (versus 25.0% across NSW) and 23.1% of people aged 15 and over are in a de facto relationship, more than double the NSW rate of 10.6%. Our Sydney WDVCS regularly supports women in these less “traditional” household and relationship structures, which can fall outside assumptions built into housing, tenancy and crisis-support systems.

Exponential growth in demand for JSC services

Across both catchments, JSC's FY25 Annual Report shows the scale of need this demographic pressure is already generating, and how far demand is outpacing funding:

- **17,927** people reached directly by our DFV services
- **7203** people reached through our community education

We are seeing a year on **year-on-year exponential increase** in the number of people reached. In just 3 years the number of people reached directly by our DFV services has **more than doubled** (i.e in FY23 we reached 7,466 people, versus 17,927 in FY25).



Our **ongoing clients are complex** and have the following demographics:

- 42% culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)
- 10% living with disability
- 6% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Although we have seen increases in funding, **demand for our services** is significantly outstripping the increase in funding. When you add into the mix the complexity of the community we serve, it is vital that Justice Support Service receives a **significant boost in funding** from the uplift promised in the recent election.

Unmet need

In addition to the need for uplift across all our programs, we want to emphasise the significant unfunded gaps below:

- **SHLV Inner West** covers a population of over 193 thousand and only has \$90,000 funding for 0.6 FTE and insufficient funding for direct overheads (i.e external supervision, training, travel, IT etc).
- **NPA Disability and Aboriginal Casework** covers vulnerable people across the City of Sydney and only has \$426,477 funding for 3 FTE and direct overheads
- **Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS)** covers the busy Sydney registry of the Family Court and only has \$227,098 funding for 1.3 FTE and direct overheads
- **WDVCAS Case Management** covers referrals from:
 - Downing Centre, Newtown and Waverley Local Courts and only has \$470,114 funding for 2.7 FTE and direct overheads
 - Bankstown, Liverpool and Fairfield Local Courts only has \$401,887 funding for 2.2 FTE and direct overheads

We also want to emphasise the need to make permanent the following Pilots in WDVCAS and uplift the funding:

- **Co-location Pilot** at Fairfield Police station only has \$148,295 funding for 1 FTE plus direct overheads until the end of FY27. The program should become permanent and be extended to cover additional Police Stations in South West Sydney, the City of Sydney and the East.
- **Hearing Support Service** covers referrals from:
 - Downing Centre, Newtown and Waverley Local Courts and only has \$387,837 funding for 2.3 FTE and direct overheads
 - Bankstown, Liverpool and Fairfield Local Courts and only has \$517,613 funding for 2.8 FTE and direct overheads

This program ends in FY27. It provides a vital service and should be better resourced and made permanent.

The funding for all of these programs is unsustainable as it does not cover both direct costs and indirect costs (i.e management oversight, rental, infrastructure, administration, partnerships, community engagement and service integration). Also, the staffing levels in these programs are ridiculously low for the areas they cover, placing significant pressure on waiting times, outreach capacity, community education and workforce sustainability.

We advocate that the uplift funding is used to sustainably resource the above programs for the current demand and the long term predicted growth in population.



What we ask

We respectfully ask the NSW Government and DCJ as part of the implementation of the funding uplift and targeting it to meet “unmet need and demand”, to consider:

- the **socio-economic, education, language and population growth** evidence set out in this letter for Fairfield, Liverpool, Canterbury-Bankstown and the City of Sydney, alongside **JSC's own service data** for the WDVCS, SHLV and IDFS
- the gaps and unmet need created through the **current inadequate funding** for SHLV Inner West; NPA Disability and Casework; FASS; and WDVCS Case Management.
- the success of the **Co-location and Hearing Support Pilots** in WDVCS and the need to extend them beyond FY27.

Justice Support Centre is proud of the work we undertake in partnership with the NSW Government and remains committed to delivering evidence-based, trauma-informed services that keep women and children safe. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your Department to discuss this letter in more detail, and to demonstrate how **targeting the new investment to uplift funding in JSC's catchment areas** to reflect the distinct pressures across both South West Sydney and the City of Sydney, would directly translate into improved safety outcomes for victim-survivors.

Thank you once again for your continued leadership and commitment to preventing domestic and family violence across New South Wales.

Yours sincerely



Melanie Noden
CEO
Justice Support Centre

