



## **NEW FEDERAL FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR GENDER & DISASTER AUSTRALIA**

In a Joint Media Release, Federal Senators, the Hon Anne Ruston and the Hon Bridget McKenzie, announced today that the Morrison Government has provided funding to Gender and Disaster Australia as part of the Government's commitment to reducing violence against women.

Gender and Disaster Australia, previously known as the GAD Pod, has been in operation for over a decade. It is a unique initiative which brings together a wide range of emergency sector, community and government agencies and representatives to address the causes and effects of gender-based violence in emergency and disaster situations.

Minister for Families and Social Services and Minister for Women's Safety, Anne Ruston noted this funding would increase understanding and awareness of gendered violence and strengthen the capacity of relief and recovery services. It will offer tools to better recognise and support women and children, and to refer men to appropriate services. "Sadly, as highlighted in the Royal Commission into National Disaster Arrangements, natural disasters such as fires and floods are often linked with increased reports of family and domestic violence". Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience, Bridget McKenzie, said, "This new training will ensure those working in disaster recovery have the tools and support to identify, refer and care for people affected by domestic violence, especially in rural and regional areas where we know there are often barriers to accessing support".

The GAD Pod was established in 2015 by Women's Health In the North, Women's Health Goulburn North East and Monash University's Disaster Resilience Initiative, as a result of earlier work on the gendered impacts of the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009 on disaster responders, residents and communities.

Director of Gender and Disaster Australia, researcher Dr Debra Parkinson welcomed the funding. "This 4-year contract with the Federal Government is an exciting next step to improve the safety of women and children – focusing on disaster situations". This national work follows a decade of research with women and men who survived Australian disasters, and training with key emergency response organisations, beginning with the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. "Without WHIN, WHGNE and MUDRI, as the legacy organisations, it would not have been possible for us to be able to announce this exciting new chapter for the gender and disaster work."

Women's Health In the North CEO, Helen Riseborough said, "We are really pleased our work has reached national relevance. We have always believed in the work and now have the funding to extend it to every state and territory in Australia." The federal funding will allow Gender and Disaster Australia to implement a world class, flexible-delivery and sustainable training package with ongoing professional resourcing and support. Ms Riseborough said, "We are thrilled that the federal funding will allow this sought-after training and the resources of Gender and Disaster Australia to increase resilience amongst Australians affected by disasters".

Minister Ruston announced the funding to address the link between disasters and increased rates of family, domestic and sexual violence. She said, "The result is greater capability within the emergency management sector and a greater resilience within individuals, families and communities". This funding addresses recommendation 22.5 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Gender and Disaster Australia associate and trainer, Steve O'Malley, has been a key part of the initiative since the early days. A 33-year fire-fighter in Victoria and an Australia Fire Services Medal recipient, Mr O'Malley said, "The Morrison Government's support will see accessible, practical support provided to disaster survivors and emergency responders alike. I'm really pleased to be a part of this work at such an important moment". The program develops community capability to assist in identifying the risks and minimising the impact of gendered violence. More resilient individuals, families and communities result from this sustainable and innovative initiative.

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