

# Media Release



## **Victorian Government set to break national commitment on violence against women**

**Monday 26 May 2014 – for immediate release**

The Victorian Government is set to break a national commitment on violence against women if it passes a flawed Bill due to be introduced into the Legislative Council next week.

In an urgent letter to National MPs whose vote will be critical, the Federation of Community Legal Centres and ten family violence and sexual assault advocacy organisations have called for Clause 4 of the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Bill 2014 to be amended or opposed.

While supporting the overall intent of the Bill, advocates argue that Clause 4 risks criminalising women who do not report child abuse due to fear of family violence, and that a defence included in the Bill is clearly inadequate.

“If this Bill becomes legislation, the Victorian Government will have directly contravened Australia’s National Plan of Action to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, to which Victoria is officially committed,” said Dr Chris Atmore, Senior Policy Adviser with the Federation, today.

Opposition to Clause 4 of the Bill is consistent with views expressed by the research and evidence arm of the National Plan, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS), which was launched last week.

“ANROWS describes ‘failure to protect’ laws like this Bill as an example of responses that worsen the impact of abuse on children. It stresses the need to integrate child protection and family violence responses so that both women and children can be properly protected and supported,” Dr Atmore said.

As well as the risk of criminalising women facing family violence who fail to disclose child abuse due to fears for their safety, the Bill fails to provide effective protection and healing for victims of child sexual abuse.

“To compound a societal failure to break the cycle of inter-generational abuse or deal with dangerously violent men by jailing a woman for trying to protect her children by silence is not justice,” said Carolyn Worth, spokesperson for the Forum for Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault, today.

The Bill passed unamended in the Legislative Assembly in early May by one vote, after Frankston MP Geoff Shaw voted with the Government following a heated debate. In the Legislative Council, Labor and the Greens are likely to oppose Clause 4, meaning that the stance of the National MPs will be critical to the Bill’s success.

### **Background**

[Joint letter to Nationals MPs in the Victorian Legislative Council](#)

[Background on ANROWS regarding failure-to-protect laws](#)

<http://anrows.org.au/research-program/grants/topic-list>

[http://www.fclc.org.au/cb\\_pages/news/call-to-mps-to-amend-failure-to-protect-bill.php](http://www.fclc.org.au/cb_pages/news/call-to-mps-to-amend-failure-to-protect-bill.php)

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