

16 August 2016

Ms Jenny Aitchison MP  
Member for Maitland  
PO Box 920  
MAITLAND NSW 2320

Our Ref: HOGIPA16/514  
Matter No: 20154670

Dear Ms Aitchison

**Formal Access Application – Notice of Decision**

I refer to your Formal Access Application under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (the GIPA Act), that you lodged with the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), and the subsequent email dated 29 June 2016, where you revised the scope of your request to copy of the following information:

- *“How much funding was provided to specialist domestic violence refuges for women experiencing domestic or family violence in NSW in:*
  - *2013-14 financial year*
  - *2014-15 financial year.”*

Please be advised that I have liaised with the Homelessness Unit in FACS, which was able to collate the data/information requested in your revised application.

I have carefully considered your request in view of the objectives of the GIPA Act where you have a legally enforceable right to obtain information, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the subject information. Further, I have also considered the requirements of section 74 of the GIPA Act, which provides that an agency may delete information from a record to which access is provided if the deleted information is not relevant, or within the scope of the information applied for, or an agency has decided to refuse access to that information.

In deciding which information to withhold in full or in part, I was required to conduct a “public interest test” where the public interest considerations favouring disclosure of government information were weighed against those factors that do not favour disclosure. The following are a number of public interest factors I considered which favour disclosure of the information requested:

- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to promote open discussion of public affairs, enhance Government accountability or contribute to positive and informed debate on issues of public importance
- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to inform the public about the operations of agencies and, in particular, their policies and practices for dealing with members of the public

- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to ensure effective oversight of the expenditure of public funds
- The information is personal information of the person to whom it is to be disclosed
- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to reveal or substantiate that an agency (or a member of an agency) has engaged in misconduct or negligent, improper or unlawful conduct
- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to advance the fair treatment of individuals in accordance with the law in their dealings with agencies
- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to reveal the reason for a government decision and any background or contextual information that informed the decision
- Disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to contribute to the administration of justice generally, including procedural fairness.

On this day 11 August 2016, I have decided to provide you with full disclosure of the information requested in your access application in accordance with section 58(1)(a) of the GIPA Act. I will now respond to your request:

- ***“How much funding was provided to specialist domestic violence refuges for women experiencing domestic or family violence in NSW in:***
  - ***2013-14 financial year***
  - ***2014-15 financial year.”***

**Response:**

The below table shows funding provided in 2013–14 and 2014–15 for homelessness services providing responses for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), including women’s refuges.

	<b>2013–14 financial year</b>	<b>2014–15 financial year</b>
<b>Women’s refuges</b>	\$40,402,140	N/A
<b>DFV-specific service packages, including women’s refuges</b>	N/A – please see detailed explanation below	\$20,154,073
<b>Cross-target service packages that have a DFV response, including women’s refuges</b>	N/A – please see detailed explanation below	\$34,110,181
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$40,402,140</b>	<b>\$54,264,254</b>

The service packages that were established in 2014–15 under the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) reform do not equate to pre-reform services; the two cannot be compared. The range of service packages includes women-only service packages that specifically or predominantly provide services to women with or without children experiencing DVF. It also includes cross-target service packages that provide multiple discrete specialist responses with a specific focus, such as a DFV specialist response, a youth specialist response, a mental health specialist response. This can be delivered, for example, through a property (e.g. crisis accommodation), or a shopfront. This means that within the one service package, an SHS provider can deliver a range of discrete services and responses through a range of outlets to meet the specific needs of multiple target groups.

In the 2013–14 financial year, a total of \$40,402,140 was provided to specialist homelessness services that provided women's refuges. Information is not available on whether these refuges were specifically 'specialist domestic violence refuges for women', for example, it is likely that some of these refuges provided responses for women who were seeking assistance for other issues, i.e. drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, etc.

In the 2014–15 financial year, a total of \$54,264,254 was allocated to SHS packages and services funded through the Service Support Fund (SSF) that have crisis accommodation (refuges), and provide responses to women experiencing DFV. This includes \$20,154,073 for SHS packages and SSF services that have crisis accommodation, and provide specialist responses for women experiencing DVF. It also includes \$34,110,181 for cross-target SHS packages and SSF services that have crisis accommodation assistance for women, including those experiencing DFV, as a priority target group while also providing responses for other client groups.

More funding is being injected into the system to make it stronger and increase the capacity of services catering for the special needs of women who are victims of domestic and family violence. As part of the NSW Government's \$60 million initiative to combat domestic violence, \$20 million is being invested over two years to boost the capacity of specialist homelessness services providing responses for women and children escaping DFV, including women's refuges. This investment will help respond to increased demand and better assist women experiencing DFV by delivering expert 24/7 around the clock support, and funding additional accommodation options.

All women's refuges owned by the NSW Government that operated prior to the reform of the specialist homelessness services system continue to operate post-reform. A network of women-only refuges has been maintained to ensure women leaving violence have access to safe accommodation. Women, including those escaping DFV, are able to access discrete specialist services and refuges run by the providers of new services.

Before the reforms, there were 63 NSW Government-owned crisis properties used as women's refuges. In the new service system, these crisis properties remain targeted at women only, with or without children. Since 2015–16, two additional women's refuges have been established in Sydney.

Some non-government providers also operate their own properties as refuges using support funding under their SHS service packages.

Providing refuges and accommodation for women is only one response, which is why specialist homelessness services now offer a greater range of prevention, early intervention and support responses.

One of the products offered by FACS is the Start Safely program which is a subsidy that provides short to medium term financial help to women who have experienced DFV in order to secure private rental accommodation. For more information, please see the [Start Safely Brochure](#) that is available from the FACS website, however, for your convenience I have attached a copy of the brochure.

If you wish to discuss the subject matter of your request, please contact Ms Maggie Pressnell, Acting Director, Homelessness on (02) 8753 9216.

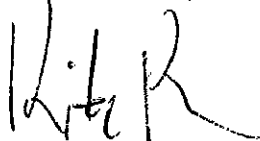
If you are aggrieved by any of the reviewable decisions in this notice of decision, you may seek a review under Part 5 of the GIPA Act, by requesting any one of the following:

- An Internal Review which must be lodged with the Right to Information Unit, Legal within 20 working days of this notice of decision. You must lodge your Internal Review at the address shown at the bottom of the first page and must be accompanied by the appropriate application fee of \$40.
- Alternatively, a request for an External Review may be lodged with either the Information and Privacy Commission, or the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Please note that you must lodge your request for an external review within 8 weeks of this notice of decision.

Please note that I will forward all receipts relating to the processing of your Formal Access Application in due course.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact me on telephone (02) 8753 8386.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rita Peci', written in a cursive style.

Rita Peci  
**Manager**

**Right to Information Unit**  
**Department of Family and Community Services, Legal**