BILL SHORTEN, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Today the Labor Party is saying for too long, the issue of family violence hasn’t been at the centre of national political debate. One in three women over the age of 15 will face physical violence. 17 in every 100 Australian women will face violence from a current or previous partner. Yet only 20 per cent all those women who face family violence from a partner, will actually report it to the police. It is a national disgrace.

Now there is a lot of momentum building in terms of making family violence a national issue. The work in Queensland, the report released in the last few days ‘Not Now, Not Ever’; the Royal Commission being pioneered by Premier Daniel Andrews, there is good work being done at all levels of government.

But the very fact that in recent days we see the distressing reports of women being killed by angry men shows that we need to do more. Canberra and the national Parliament should be where the national issues of politics are debated and leadership is given. To that end, after consulting widely with respected campaigners, with survivors, with police, with the experts and with the researchers, I have written to Prime Minister Tony Abbott and asked him to convene a National Crisis Summit.
If the Prime Minister feels that what’s currently underway is adequate, what I promise the Australian people is that within 100 days of being elected that we will convene this National Crisis Summit.

What we need to hear in the same room is prime ministers and opposition leaders, premiers, police, authorities and child protection experts, Family Court judges, women’s refuges, legal services, most importantly the voices of survivors in the same room at the same time. There is momentum building, what we now need to do is get on with the job.

In the meantime, Labor will indicate as a down payment, showing our commitment to do our bit, that we would seek to implement almost another $50 million to go to the front line of legal services. No woman should go through the legal system without support, no woman who has already experienced family violence should be re-traumatised by the postcode lottery which depends if the magistrate or the judge is attuned to the issues or is not, affecting what happens. The risk of confrontation with the angry ex-partner on the court steps, the isolating and impoverishing experience of having to change jobs, of having to move house away from family and friends, making sure that the children are safe.

We also believe that it is appropriate to put $15 million into national ‘Safe at Home’ programs. It is not right that when family violence occurs, the perpetrator stays in the house, and the victim has to move. We also believe there should be $8 million for perpetrator mapping, that’s making sure that people don’t fall between the cracks or the silos of different agencies and organisations. We’ll be speaking about family violence today at the National Press Club, this is an opportunity for the Government and the Opposition to reach out on behalf of survivors, on behalf of hundreds of thousands of women and their children and say we can do better.

One other thing I should just briefly say before I go to questions. We hear reports in the last few hours, that it is a matter of hours before the Bali two might be taken from their current prison to their next destination. We should not give up, Labor deplores the death penalty, we don’t believe it achieves justice, we know that the Indonesian people are generous and we appeal to that generosity. We do not believe that anything is solved by executing these two young men who by all accounts have more than rehabilitated themselves. We don’t ask that these men be forgiven or freed, but we do ask that they don’t be executed. There is no doubt that there is a contest under way between the rule of power and the rule of law and we mustn’t give up our faith in the rule of law. Any questions?
JOURNALIST: Do you believe that the Government has done enough to try and save these men?

SHORTEN: On days like today there can be no daylight between the Government and the Opposition and there is none. I do believe that DFAT, our ambassadors, all the behind the scenes pressure that can be placed and lobbying is, has been done and is being done and indeed the people of Indonesia should be aware that Australia is united in seeking clemency for these two men.

JOURNALIST: Should Tony Abbott or Julie Bishop have travelled to Indonesia to make pleas in person?

SHORTEN: I am not going to second guess today when there may be a matter of hours before these two men are transported to their next prison, some sort of petty argument between the Government and the Opposition. Again I say, I believe the Government and the people working in it, a lot of people who don’t see the front of the cameras, are working incredibly hard and my thoughts are with them and with the families and the lawyers of these two young men and most importantly these two young men. But they should know that Australia wants to see them saved, everyone.

JOURNALIST: Mr Shorten what would this National Crisis Summit achieve and how will it be different from the COAG process? Why can’t this just be done through that process including the AFP, police commissioners as you mentioned?

SHORTEN: Well COAG is a good step forward, I’m not in the business of throwing rocks at people doing good steps, but it is clear to me, it is clear to survivors, it’s clear to people who work, that if we’re to have the leaders in the same room, we need the survivors in the same room, we need the legal services in the same room, we need to hear the uncomfortable truths.

Family violence is a disempowering event, it takes away from a woman’s control over her own life. It challenges in many cases her very identity as a parent, her ability to protect their children. It is important that as we reach out for solutions we don’t exclude survivors and the very people who’ve been through the process from decision making about their future. It is important that we do this on an annual basis, that we make sure that we have performance and measures that we are actually keeping the word that we, that the promises we made.

JOURNALIST: With the $50 million that you’ve just announced, will some of that money go into welfare, I know you’ve mentioned now and in the past about women if they are victims of family violence who find it difficult to go to work, they have to change jobs, will there be special provisions in there for these women?
**SHORTEN:** The first step is that we make sure that a woman confronting the legal system is not on her own. I know many individual stories – you go up the steps of a court. If a magistrate is trained in family violence, it is a better process but it is possible we need more judicial training. You get courts who aren’t familiar with the issues. You can imagine, and you don’t have to imagine because it happens, that you’re in a corridor of a court built 30 or 40 years ago, you are trying to mind your kids from running around the place, you’ve got the stress and trauma of dealing with strangers, you’ve had to tell your story to police and other people, it is highly embarrassing and humiliating, you confront the person who has been your abuser.

This is not straight forward. The survivors make it clear, they have to change jobs if the abuser knows where they work. When you move from your own community and relocate in cities, you leave all that informal network of support for you and your children. It makes people poor. You have to leave your own house. So that is why we need support in the first instance in the legal system. Now that doesn’t mean that’s all legal support...

**JOURNALIST:** Like welfare assistance?

**SHORTEN:** That’s right, but that court process really is a postcode lottery. Sometimes you get the professional support which you are getting at, but other times and even as we speak today, there will be women making impossible decisions- ‘Do I stay or do I go?’, ‘can I afford to go?’, ‘what will happen to my job?’, ‘what will happen to my kids and their schools?’, ‘if I move to a different town, who’s going to help?’.

**JOURNALIST:** In regards to university reform, there are reports the Government is considering penalising universities who increase their fees above a certain level, what do you make of that kind of safe guard?

**SHORTEN:** Well there they go again. The Abbott Government, the Liberal Government, they are repeat offenders. The very fact they are proposing an $11,000 penalties for universities who set $100,000 degrees confirms they think that there will be $100,000 degrees. You wouldn’t need a penalty system of $11,000 if you didn’t think universities were going to charge $100,000. This Government is making policy on the run. It doesn’t matter if it has stated 53 times that it wants a GP Tax, then it drops it for a couple of days to save Tony Abbott’s job.

On higher education, they have had plenty of make-overs – this Government’s Budget was made up at the time of the last Budget, it was a bunch of broken promises – in higher education they are seeking to introduce $100,000 degrees,
they want to deregulate and increase the price of going to university so fewer students go to uni. They should go back to the start and sit down with everyone to work through something better for higher education rather than their current rotten broken promises.

**JOURNALIST:** On the Medicare co-payment, we’ve heard from Brian Owler saying he wants to see an alternative in the next six months and that we can’t wait until the next election for this. In that light, when are we going to see Labor’s policy on healthcare?

**SHORTEN:** We work with the AMA. I found it incredible yesterday to have a Prime Minister of Australia say that he is going to sit down and talk to people. Well what has he been doing for the last 18 months? Every day it is like ‘show and tell’ time in Parliament, where the Prime Minister reluctantly discovers something new to tell the Australia about. So when he says ‘Oh well, it’s gone. Forget about that’. He has wasted 18 months of the nation’s time that we will never get back. So I am very sceptical that these people learn anything and indeed, to that end, I have a quote here from the current Health Minister, Sussan Ley, so you’re going to the question of health policy into the future. Sussan Ley said yesterday, she stood behind the policy intent of the GP Tax: “The policy intent was and remains a good one.” She went even further and said that: “there are a lot of people who attend the doctor, who pay nothing and can afford to pay a bit more and that's where we have to land in this discussion.” These people just don’t get it.

They want to have a GP Tax – what has changed is their tactics not there mind.

Tony Abbott and his team just want to make sure they get breathing space in their job and that is the only thing they are about saving, not Medicare.

In terms of our own policies, we will work them through with doctors, with nurses, with clinicians, with patients and with consumers. This Government cannot help themselves. No one believes that if they had the numbers, or they weren’t confront by a tough Labor, they would rush through a GP Tax tomorrow.

**JOURNALIST:** Just on metadata, I know there are strong reservations within some sections of the Labor party about passing this legislation. I know you are waiting to see the amendments but are you likely to pass this? Or are you going to make further amendments or are you wanting to see the money for the Ombudsman in the Budget for example (inaudible)?

**SHORTEN:** Metadata is a very important issue. It is the third tranche of legislation on national security that the Government has put forward. Towards
the end year, Malcolm Turnbull tabled what we thought was rushed and pretty patchy legislation. We had to have an argument behind the scenes, an arm-wrestle with the Government to say ‘just slow down. This is pretty important stuff, people’s private information. Let’s get it right, the balance with National Security’. We argued successfully with the Government that we needed to have a Parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security to review it. That’s the job that Parliament should do – Check the legislation and look for the unintended consequences. Over a period of months, and hundreds of submissions, the Government has exceeded to a range of requests that we have put for to make the legislation better. We are yet to see the Legislation and I know the Government is working on it to be fair, the amendments that is.

We would also like to see what the Government’s view is on all of the recommendations. There are a couple of issues which do require more work and I think any fair minded person would recognise it. One, and not the least of which would be interest to you is press freedom. We want to make sure that the press are able to do their jobs and they’re able to maintain the confidentiality of their sources, this is an important issue and I don’t think the matter is resolved and there is not agreement quite where that lands. I think the question is –

**JOURNALIST:** But that’s outside the committee process isn’t it?

**SHORTEN:** No, no that’ll go to, there’s a debate about whether or not that should be a recommendation and there’s a debate about how that’s affected so that’s an issue. Also we’re keen to make sure that Senator John Faulkner lately of this place proposed having some greater power for the Parliamentary Committee like happens in other jurisdictions around the world on national security for oversight. We think that’s very important. There’s also been some issues raised about where the data is stored in the cloud. Is it stored onshore, it is stored offshore? None of these issues are issue which are too hard to work out, but they’re not issues which can be sorted out by, you know, a statement or a press release in a matter of minutes. But I would submit our record. We’ve stood up on all the matters that I think are important to Australian’s and we’ve managed to work with the Government and navigate them to a better place and we’ll keep doing that work. Last question.

**JOURNALIST:** Are you still concerned that sending more troops into Iraq is a case of mission creep, considering you’ve had a number of former and current members of the Defence Force back the move?

**SHORTEN:** Labor supports this move. We set our principles for our intervention in Iraq: Does the Iraqi Government want us there? Is the Iraqi Government doing the other things about making Iraq a more democratic society working? We want to make sure that our troops aren’t asked to do all the frontline
fighting, but rather just in a training capacity, and that’s what where doing. So this latest training provision seems to falls within the guidelines that Labor’s set.

And I would also just say I think our training forces over there now, I had the privilege to see them in Baghdad, are professional, they’re skilled, it’s a high risk environment and I say to them you’re doing a great job, and I also say to their families back in Australia in this Parliament we’re very conscious that while the people you love are serving Australia, we’re very conscious of your needs and wellbeing in Australia. Thank you everyone.

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT: LEADER’S OFFICE MEDIA UNIT 02 6277 4053