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Central West domestic violence rates outstrip NSW average amid critical crisis housing shortage



Dane Millerd Follow 4 min read • Nov 4, 2026 11:35am

Women escaping dangerous and volatile relationships in the state's Central-West are being failed by a dangerous shortage of safe housing, as the latest disturbing statistics reveal domestic violence rates across the region are significantly higher than the NSW average – in the two-year period since the horrific murder of Forbes mum Molly Ticehurst and the introduction of Molly's Law.

The cold-blooded murder of Ms Ticehurst was a high-profile Australian domestic violence case that occurred in Forbes on 22 April 2024. The case sparked national outrage and immediate legislative changes due to systemic failures surrounding bail laws for domestic violence offenders.

Enacted in June 2024 following the death of Ms Ticehurst, New South Wales' "Molly's Law" reforms the state's bail framework by reversing the presumption of bail for serious domestic violence offences to a "show cause" requirement. The legislation also mandates 24/7 electronic GPS monitoring for released offenders, strips court registrars of bail decision-making powers, and elevates risk assessment priorities for victim safety. Sadly, there has been little impact if the current data is anything to go by.

The recent figures paint a troubling picture of a region where women face not only the threat of violence but a desperate shortage of shelter to escape it. It has even given further weight to calls from NSW independent Orange MP, Phil Donato for tougher DV sentencing. Donato, who has seen first-hand many of these incidents from his previous life of service, has been extremely vocal about the issue particularly since Ticehurst's killer, Daniel Billings decided to appeal the severity of his sentence.

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) figures for the 12 months to June 2026 reveal the Central West recorded 1404 domestic violence assaults, a rate 1.4 times the NSW average.

Even more alarming, stalking, intimidation and harassment incidents reached 2239 – 1.7 times the state rate – while breaches of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) hit 1200, or 1.8 times the NSW average.

There were also 443 recorded sexual assaults, representing a rate 1.3 times the state average.

While recorded offence numbers remained stable across the Central-West over the two years to June 2026, the figures expose the scale of the challenge facing regional communities.

And behind the statistics are women and children who urgently need somewhere safe to go. A point raised by Forbes-Wilcannia Centre Care Manager, Ann Marie Miosch when

previously talking to this publication in relation to the denial of six extra DV case workers by the Minns government in the last financial year.

Ms Miosch also highlighted the “lack of safe options for rural women to access” when speaking on triple-murderer Julian Ingram and his crimes that shocked the Lake Cargelligo community earlier this year. Ingram shot and killed his 25-year-old ex-partner, Sophie Quinn (who was seven to eight months pregnant with an unborn son), and her friend John Harris (32) while they were in a car before driving to another nearby address of Sophie’s aunt, Nerida Quinn (50), shooting and killing her. He also shot and seriously injured a 19-year-old family friend, Caleb McQueen, who survived.

Sue Cripps, Interim CEO and Director of Housing at Women’s Community Shelters (WCS), says the housing crisis is trapping women in dangerous situations, with regional NSW particularly exposed.

A housing and homelessness specialist with more than 20 years’ experience, including as founding CEO of Homelessness NSW, Ms Cripps says shelters are being squeezed by rising demand and a lack of affordable housing. A salient point previously raised by Ms Miosch.

In 2025/26, WCS supported 2,021 women and children – a 32 per cent increase on the previous year – and delivered a record 81,259 safe bed nights.

But for every woman the organisation managed to support, another three could not be accommodated.

A further 2,355 people sought assistance WCS could not provide, an increase of 180 per cent in three years.

“We need crisis shelters in regional and high-demand areas, including Western NSW,” Ms Cripps said.

She said women were increasingly being forced to remain in crisis accommodation because there was nowhere affordable to move, leaving fewer beds available for others fleeing violence.

The danger of leaving an abusive relationship was also confronting.

According to Ms Cripps, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show 58 per cent of women killed by their male partners were murdered during or after separation.

“We know that on average it takes a woman at least seven times to leave a violent relationship,” she said.

“Women shouldn’t have to be forced to stay in a violent relationship because there is nowhere safe to go.”

Ms Cripps said the Central West’s elevated rates of ADVO breaches, stalking and intimidation should trigger co-ordinated action between police, courts, health services, housing providers and specialist domestic violence organisations.

“These offences can be indicators of escalating risk and should trigger a co-ordinated response,” she said.

She is calling for more regional crisis shelters, transitional housing, dedicated case management and a major increase in social and affordable housing.

Vacant properties could also be converted into transitional accommodation through partnerships with property owners and developers.

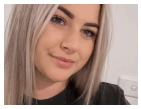
The approach has already delivered results, with between 86 and 90 per cent of women leaving WCS transitional housing over the past four years moving into safe and secure homes.

“A woman’s postcode should never determine whether she can access safety,” Ms Cripps said.

“Women and children in the Central West deserve timely, specialist support and a safe place to go when they need it.”

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732. In an emergency, call triple-0.

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