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## Lifeline records busiest day after emotional fortnight

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CALLS to Lifeline Australia have spiked to an all-time high as emotions come to the fore over the rising tide of women being murdered and people demand action to prevent domestic violence.

The crisis support service received 4371 calls, messages and webchats on Sunday, making for its busiest day on record and 20 per cent above the yearly average.

It follows the targeted murder of five women in a Bondi shopping centre and a series of brutal domestic violence homicides across the country in recent weeks,

Lifeline domestic violence sector manager Angela Lynch said the spike in calls could be linked to the wall-to-wall media coverage of domestic and sexual violence.

"More in the community are hurting and for those who are or have been directly impacted by either domestic violence or sexual violence, those conversations can land in a very different and very personal way," she said on Tuesday.

"They could have general feelings of anxiety or being unsafe and it can bring up personal issues of what they lived through and the injustice perhaps of what they've encountered."

Rising living costs and the national housing crisis have also compounded stresses on the community, Lifeline said. Demand on Monday fell, though it remained above this year's daily aver-

age of about 3750 calls, messages and webchats.

An alliance of psychologists said the figures painted an accurate yet bleak picture of the mental health crisis impacting Australia.

"It is time for the federal government to invest deeply in the mental health of our country," Australian Association of Psychologists' Tegan Carrison said.

Pandemic-era subsidies providing 10 additional psychology sessions per calendar year for people with a mental health treatment plan should be reinstated, she said.

Ms Lynch, also a lawyer and high-profile advocate for sexual and family violence prevention, said the higher demand did not mean the public should shy away from discussing the issue.

"It's actually very positive that our community is engaging in this," she said. "We have to confront them otherwise they will not be dealt with."

"But at the same time, it's important to also realise it (media coverage and public debate) does have impacts on our community - these figures are evidence of those results." Following weekend

rallies across the nation calling for more action, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will meet state and territory leaders at a virtual national cabinet on Wednesday to discuss preventative measures for violence against women. The family and sexual violence commissioner

has been invited to make a presentation at the specially convened cabinet.

■ 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732); Lifeline 13 11 14; National Sexual Abuse and Redress Support Service 1800 211 028