

ONE YEAR
ON FROM
**THE ROYAL
COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY
VIOLENCE**



RESPONDING TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION

The Royal Commission into Family Violence (Royal Commission) provided a once in a generation opportunity to examine the family violence system from the ground up, work alongside the sector and put victim survivors at the centre of family violence reform. Significant progress has been made across government to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations since the release of the report one year ago on 29 March 2016.

Responding to the Royal Commission is about more than simply acquitting recommendations. In November last year the Victorian Government released *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change* (10 Year Plan) which outlined our ambitious reform agenda to transform the way in which we address family violence and to drive lasting change to the attitudes which contribute to family violence. Government also released *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* which was a key step in raising awareness about the link between gender inequality and family violence.

Government is taking an integrated approach to implementing family violence reform alongside broader social services reforms through the *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children, Homes for Victorians: Affordability, access and choice*, the *10 Year Mental Health Plan* and the *Community Safety Statement*. This approach will help us shift from a system where the victim bears the burden to one that is easy to navigate and empowers people to receive the services they need, when they need them.

These are all significant reforms and they will take time. The Government recognises that investment alone will not change services. As such, we have taken significant action in the last 12 months, and are committed to implementing these reforms over the next ten years.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Significant progress has already been made towards implementing the Royal Commission’s recommendations and driving reforms across the family violence and broader social services sectors.

Government is undertaking genuine, effective and widespread engagement and consultation with the sector and victim survivors. This is critical to the success of the whole reform program as the insights and experiences of those who work in and use services are involved in the implementation. In particular this has included the establishment of the Family Violence Steering Committee and Victoria’s first Victim Survivors’ Advisory Council and the Industry Taskforce. We have ensured strong Aboriginal representation across these family violence and social service reform governance structures. We also continue to be guided by the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and have established the Aboriginal Family Violence Co-Design Forum to provide advice on key family violence reform initiatives.

The unprecedented level of investment of \$572 million in the 2016-17 State Budget enabled us to begin our immediate response and start implementing the most urgent recommendations. Already we are seeing major changes in the way services are delivered.

WORK IS UNDERWAY TO:

- Implement prevention programs to ensure family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated
- Develop the strategic and structural foundations for ongoing prevention activities and initiatives
- Strengthen prevention and responses for Aboriginal Communities and Diverse Communities
- Establish Support and Safety Hubs
- Meet demand for services
- Strengthen responses for families and keep children safe
- Embed earlier, more effective responses
- Provide safe and stable housing and support recovery
- Ensure victim-centred justice
- Enhance the response of courts to family violence
- Strengthen police responses to family violence
- Improve perpetrator interventions and accountability
- Strengthen the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework
- Share information and work more effectively
- Work in partnership across all levels of government

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY ARE NOT TOLERATED

SAFE AND STRONG: A VICTORIAN GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

On 5 December 2016, Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy, *Safe and Strong*, was released, initiating a series of landmark reforms for enduring and sustained action to deliver gender equality, and address sexism and violence against women in all its forms. The Strategy sets out how we will support women and girls to be safer and stronger in their homes, workplaces and community.

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

123 schools across Victoria are currently leading the way and driving change within their school community by championing and supporting the implementation of Respectful Relationships whole of school approach recommended by the Royal Commission. This model builds on a pilot in 19 schools delivered with Our Watch in which every member of the school community was engaged in embedding a culture of respect and gender equality. \$21.8 million has been provided to start the initiative in leading schools, recruit partner schools and employ locally based Respectful Relationships officers to work with schools. This builds on delivery of Respectful Relationships in the curriculum for all year levels, supported by new teaching and learning materials launched in 2016. Respectful Relationships training is also being developed for up to 4,000 early educators.

STRENGTHENING PREVENTION AND RESPONSES FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Family violence prevention programs for Aboriginal women have been extended by two years through an additional \$500,000 extra funding. These programs will reach thousands of Aboriginal women, providing information about family violence services and legal rights, therapy and empowering women to take a leadership role within their community to increase awareness of family violence.

STRENGTHENING PREVENTION AND RESPONSES FOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence was provided with \$2.25 million to increase their service delivery capacity, particularly in rural and regional Victoria, and to build their role as a specialist body. In addition, a \$200,000 investment over two years has boosted funding support to family violence prevention programs in culturally diverse communities through tailored programs, run by and for women from diverse backgrounds, to bolster women's leadership and economic independence.

Through \$1 million of funding, programs are underway which support older victims of family violence and raise awareness so that people know and understand the rights of senior Victorians and how to seek help. This funding will also support programs to prevent perpetrators from committing family violence against older Victorians and encourage bystanders to speak out.

Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians, has been announced as an Ambassador to give older people who are victims of family violence a voice.

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria and Drummond Street Services' Queerspace are working in partnership to develop a specialist training module for frontline workers addressing the risks and power dynamics of LGBTI family violence.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PREVENTION PARTNERSHIPS

\$2.65 million has been allocated for Community Prevention Partnerships Grants. The grants round opened on 15 December 2016 and closed on 15 February 2017. Successful applicants will be announced in May 2017. These partnerships will help build the evidence base for establishing the local level prevention alliances to support the oversight and coordination of prevention activities. A further \$1.2 million was allocated for 2017-18 to support locally-based prevention programs.

STATE-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

The Family Violence Behaviour Change Campaign was launched in November 2016 beginning with a series of television advertisements on what constitutes the majority of family violence and its impact. This campaign will be extended to include more focused efforts with Aboriginal people and diverse communities including LGBTI groups.

VICTIM SURVIVORS, VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE SAFE AND SUPPORTED TO RECOVER AND THRIVE

SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS

Five launch areas have been announced for Support and Safety Hubs at Barwon, Bayside Peninsula, Inner Gippsland, Mallee and North-East Melbourne regions. It is expected these sites will be operational by the end of the year. Work is also underway to develop a State-wide Concept seeking community input into the local design of Support and Safety Hubs.

The Government has been engaging closely with stakeholders and communities across the State to co-design the Support and Safety Hubs. This includes a series of regional co-design forums held in October 2016 which were attended by over 700 people, including workers from across the service system, victim survivors and other community members, and which helped shape the vision for the Hubs outlined in *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*.




Building on this work, in early 2017 we held a series of workshops with an expert design group comprised of practitioners and leading thinkers from across the service system, and a number of small group discussions with people who have experienced the service system, including victim survivors. The insights from these consultations and other work to date will inform the Hubs State-wide Concept, which will define their intent, scope and policy framework, and provide the basis for further local design work in partnership with communities.

MEETING DEMAND FOR SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

In a significant boost to services, \$87 million was provided to expand case management, men's family violence services, counselling for women and children, flexible support packages and sexual assault support services, as well as provide greater support for women and children from Aboriginal Communities and Diverse Communities.

This includes \$45.6 million over two years to boost specialist family violence client support, more than doubling the capacity to provide case management support to victim survivors. By the end of this financial year, around 9,000 more women and children are expected to benefit from this support.

Other key elements of this investment include:

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 \$6.4 million over two years to support adults, young people and children who are victims of sexual assault
.....
-  \$5.2 million for men's family violence services
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-  \$5 million over two years for counselling for women and children, and
.....
-  \$6 million over two years for the design and implementation of new family violence services.
.....

STRENGTHENING RESPONSES FOR FAMILIES AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

In line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the *Roadmap for Reform: strong Families, safe Children* focuses on early intervention with families, increased and more integrated supports and better engagement with children, young people and families. In the context of responding to family violence, delivering the Roadmap for Reform will mean services are able to better identify and respond to family violence risk and other vulnerabilities earlier, and work together to provide tailored responses to support vulnerable children and families recover and thrive.

An initial investment of \$168.2 million was made in the 2016-17 State Budget to support the first phase of implementing the Roadmap for Reform. The Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap.

The Government has been working to increase the focus on early intervention, including through:

- investing \$4.6 million over four years to expand the Caring Dads program to help Victorian fathers foster a better relationship with their children.
- investing \$1.6 million over two years for Aboriginal early learning centres to implement prevention and early intervention strategies to help vulnerable families address family violence and other vulnerabilities through tailored, wrap around services.
- investing \$1.6 million over two years to develop and trial new approaches to the delivery of culturally responsive, high quality Maternal Child Health services for Aboriginal families.
- investing \$32.3 million over two years to create a new service for families who need the most support in their child's first years. The new service will draw on strong evidence, expanding and bringing together the best parts of existing early intervention programs.
- expanding a specialised program targeting adolescents to help stop the cycle of violence.

Family violence is a major driver of child vulnerability. A significant proportion of children in child protection and out-of-home care have experienced family violence. As recommended by the Royal Commission, the Government is strengthening child protection practice advice to improve the way child protection responds to families experiencing family violence. We are also implementing the Family Violence Child Protection Partnership, which involves co-locating Specialist Family Violence Workers in Child Protection offices across the State. The initiative aims to strengthen Child Protection practice, enable joint assessments and assist Child Protection practitioners to better understand the family violence service system.

The Government is progressing reforms to transform out-of-home care to strengthen home-based care and improve outcomes for children and young people. This is being driven through the South Initiative, which is developing and trialling nine innovative models of care through close engagement with the sector, as well as children, young people and their families. We are also continuing to invest in foster care recruitment and upskilling the residential care workforce.

The Government is working closely with the Aboriginal community to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in, or at risk of entering out-of-home care. This includes implementing the \$16.5 million investment in the 2016-17 State Budget, including support for cultural planning, support for Aboriginal organisations to manage more kinship care placements, and progressing the transfer of guardianship of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

FAMILY VIOLENCE FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PACKAGES

Government has invested \$40 million over two years to expand Family Violence Flexible Support Packages, providing 5,000 extra packages to help women and children escaping family violence to rebuild their lives by meeting expenses such as rental or relocation costs, clothing and books for children, or security measures to improve safety at home.

FAMILY VIOLENCE FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PACKAGES CASE STUDY



Mary, a mother with two primary school age children left a highly abusive relationship with her partner of many years and father to her two children. During the relationship there were repeated family violence incidents, with police involvement and multiple intervention orders. A Flexible Support Package helped Mary with removalist costs, assistance with bond and the first month's rent for new, safe accommodation for her and her children. The funding also assisted Mary's family with school uniforms and technological aids to support schooling, and sporting registrations for the children to assist with integration in their new community and support their social development. Payment for a child counsellor/psychologist was also approved for the children, to help them work through their emotional distress. Mary is also upgrading her qualifications to enable her to return to work.

With continuing support from the family's case manager, access to a more secure home, timely support from counsellors and access to vocational training, Mary and her children are continuing to work through the multiple impacts of prolonged family violence. They are also becoming more settled in their new local community, encouraged by the greater sense of protection and support they are experiencing.

“Bethany Community Support can now provide longer term support in the form of case management, Family Violence After Hours services, and Flexible Support Packages to approximately 200 women and children across the Barwon Area each year – a 100% increase from existing funding. Women are now receiving next-day follow up after an incident of family violence, thanks to the seamless manner in which in which their information is passed between the Bethany employed After Hours worker and the in-hours worker the next day. Women have indicated that they appreciate not having to be re-assessed by another specialist Women’s Family Violence service and are assured that the information is contained in the one service.”

*– Executive Manager, Child & Family Services,
Bethany Community Services*

EARLIER, MORE EFFECTIVE RESPONSES EMBEDDING PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

Family Violence Principal Practitioners have been employed in the Department of Justice and Regulation, Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and Training.


The establishment of these positions was a recommendation of the Royal Commission, and will build family violence capability, lead practice reform across the departments and support the key priorities for practice development identified by the Royal Commission and the 10 Year Plan. The Family Violence Principal Practitioners will support equitable and sustainable models of practice that recognise intersectionality and address vulnerability, trauma and disadvantage.

STRENGTHENING HOSPITAL RESPONSES

Health services play an integral role in identifying and responding to family violence. Recognising this, the Government has provided \$1.2 million for the Strengthening Hospital Responses for Family Violence Initiative. So far, 15 health services have been funded to train hospital staff to better identify and respond to family violence.

SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORTED RECOVERY ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

The Royal Commission highlighted a lack of appropriate accommodation for victim survivors, with many being turned away from accommodation. In response, the Government announced a \$152 million Family Violence housing blitz which included:

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 \$21 million to increase the availability and quality of safe, secure and stable housing for victim survivors and their children. Work is underway to replace four communal family violence refuges with core and cluster model refuges in order to provide women and children with modern, independent living arrangements.
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.....
\$50 million for rapid housing assistance, delivering 184 additional social housing properties and 124 headleased properties.
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.....
\$16 million in 2016-17 to provide private rental assistance.
.....



.....
\$25 million over two years to support construction of 180 new units of crisis accommodation and upgrades of existing accommodation for the homeless. This funding has so far contributed to the upgrade VincentCare's crisis accommodation at Ozanam House to increase the number and range of accommodation available, construction of two youth refuges and construction of the first purpose built accommodation and support location for women in Footscray, opened on 30 November 2016.
.....

Building on the Family Violence housing blitz, in March 2017 the Government released *Homes for Victorians: Affordability, access and choice* which includes a \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund as well as other initiatives that will provide a significant increase in new social housing stock. These initiatives will contribute to removing blockages in refuges and crisis accommodation and transitional housing so that victim survivors can gain stable housing as quickly as possible.

“For women and their families who have escaped a dangerous and unsafe environment, the impact of having a safe, stable and affordable place to live cannot be understated. The Rapid re-Housing program provides stability and independence while the family find their feet, connect with communities and schools and build capacity to take control”

— VincentCare

SUPPORTED RECOVERY THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS TO FINANCIAL COUNSELLING, ENSURED FINANCIAL SECURITY AND TENANCY REFORMS

Recognising the significant impact of family violence on the economic security and independence of victims, an additional 10 full time equivalent financial counsellors with expertise in family violence and economic abuse have been appointed to work in 17 service locations across the State.

The Victorian Law Reform Commission is reviewing the provision of state-funded financial assistance to victims of family violence under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996*.





As part of the review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*, the options paper "Heading for Home", was released for public consultation in early 2017. This included the options canvassed by the Royal Commission to protect tenants experiencing family violence. Specialist family violence services were part of the consultations.

In 2016/17, the Tenants Union of Victoria (TUV), with support from Consumer Affairs Victoria, provided 11 tenancy training sessions, which included specialist sessions on Family Violence and Tenancies and Financial Counselling and Tenancies. The TUV worked in partnership with local Family Violence Integration Co-ordinators and Homelessness Network Co-ordinators to ensure strong and comprehensive representation at these training sessions.

VICTIM-CENTRED JUSTICE BOOSTING FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION THROUGH STRENGTHENED LAWS

The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* was recognised by the Royal Commission as a strong foundation upon which Victoria should build its future response to family violence. However, it also identified a number of improvements which could strengthen the legislative response to family violence and were critical to achieving broader reform of the system.

In March 2017, new laws were introduced into Parliament which enhances the justice system's response to family violence. The reforms include:

-
 faster and simpler processes for serving family violence intervention orders
.....
-  new measures to prevent abuses of the intervention order appeal process
.....
-  allowing pre-recorded evidence to be used in some proceedings for family violence offences and
.....
-  increased protections for children subjected to family violence.
.....

ENHANCING THE RESPONSE OF COURTS TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Courts are often at the front line of responding in the immediate aftermath of family violence and an effective response is critical to ensuring the safety of victims and accountability of perpetrators. Recognising this important role, the Courts have taken a number of key actions to enhance the response. This has included:

.....
+ A review of the Family Violence Court Division to better inform the development of the rollout of Specialist Family Violence Courts across Victoria.
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.....
+ Introduction of Family Violence Lead Magistrates at all Headquarter Courts, to provide leadership and best practice for family violence across the State.
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.....
+ Begun holding daily coordination meetings ahead of hearing family violence matters at a number of Magistrates' Courts across the State, with this practice to be state-wide by the end of the year.
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.....
+ Trialled capping of family violence listings at Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court and staggering of family violence lists to manage family violence listings at a number of courts.
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.....
+ Commencement of the use an online application form for family violence intervention orders at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Ringwood, Warrnambool, Portland and Hamilton Magistrates' Courts.
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.....
+ Development of a range of plain language resources about the family violence intervention order process which are now available online.
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+ Working with Victoria Police and Victoria Legal Aid to improve perpetrator accountability and enhance the safety of victims of family violence through the introduction of the fast tracking model for family violence-related criminal matters, ensuring these are dealt with as early as possible, within defined timeframes.
.....

In relation to court and broader justice reforms, Government has funded:

.....
+ \$58.1 million in safety and security upgrades in the 2016-17 Budget, to employ more security officers and upgrade technology, as well as refurbish 16 courts to allow for separate waiting areas and additional interview rooms for family violence victims.
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.....
+ \$4.6 million for legal assistance, supporting victims of family violence by expanding specialist family violence services at community legal centres and Victoria Legal Aid.
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DUTY LAWYER AND COMMUNITY LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND



We invested \$2.5 million in additional funding for community legal centres. This funding was directed to increasing the capacity of community legal centres to provide duty lawyer services and legal assistance to victims of family violence.

Particularly in rural and regional areas, the availability of duty lawyer services can have significant impacts. At the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre in Bendigo, this funding meant the Centre could:

- Provide a fortnightly duty lawyer service at Kyneton and Castlemaine, which had been without these services for four months
- Undertake community legal education on family violence and legal help across the region
- Provide 'secondary consults' to family violence workers, including information about how the legal system works and will impact on their clients, and
- Undertake casework arising from intervention order duty lawyer appearances and on other legal issues caused by family violence, including family law matters.

“Often we see a family violence victim in a small country town...When a woman is seeking an Intervention Order, she goes to a small court where she and the perpetrator enter together. He might be physically close and try to speak to her. When we provide a duty lawyer service in these circumstances, the duty lawyer literally stands between the client and the perpetrator. She walks with the FV victims, listens to her side of the story, and links her with other services”

– Principal Lawyer of the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre, Clare Sauro.






At the Murray Mallee Community Legal Centre in Mildura, this funding was also used to start a new duty lawyer service at the court in Kerang, and also enabled the Centre to take on contested intervention order matters. This meant that clients who were provided with duty lawyer advice did not have to be referred on to another lawyer to assist with the contested hearing and did not have to re-tell their story

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

As part of its focus on making the courts more victim-focused and in line with the system aim of recovery, the Royal Commission identified a number of potential benefits associated with a restorative justice approach. In response, we have commenced reviewing the different models which could be used, as well as consulting with key experts and victim survivor representatives to inform the development of a restorative justice framework.

WORKING WITH CORRECTIONS CLIENTS

Corrections Victoria have undertaken a number of activities over the last 12 months, including:

-
 Piloting the Beyond the Violence program in Community Correctional Services (CCS) which resulted in positive outcomes for the female offenders who participated.
.....
-  Extending the Out of the Dark program and sexual assault counselling for a two year period.
.....
-  Expanding service delivery capacity for sexual assault counselling to provide support for women supervised by CCS post-release and to include family violence related trauma.
.....
-  Embedding a referral pathway for victim survivors of family violence into practice guidelines across prisons and CCS to ensure timely access to support services.
.....
-  Undertaking a project alongside Victoria Police to receive electronic notifications of prisoners and offenders experiencing family violence-related contacts with police.
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STRENGTHENED POLICE RESPONSES TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

VICTORIA POLICE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Royal Commission recognised the significant achievements of Victoria Police in strengthening the focus on family violence in recent years but also identified areas for further reform to provide greater consistency and robustness of the approach to family violence.




The Victoria Police frontline response to family violence will be transformed through the recruitment of 415 specialist and dedicated family violence officers. Victoria Police are also establishing an operating model for Specialist Family Violence Teams, increasing specialist and investigative skills and changing career structures to better embed family violence as core business.

To strengthen the response of Victoria Police a compulsory e-learning package has been developed and completed by 12,825 Victoria Police staff including 49 Superintendents and 81 per cent of both Sergeants and Senior Sergeants.

Following the allocation of an initial \$2.89 million to support the establishment of the Victoria Police Centre of Learning, senior staff have been appointed to commence work on curriculum design and development. Consultation is also underway to determine the infrastructure needs for this significant initiative to strengthen capability of Victoria Police to respond to family violence. Further work on the Centre of Learning is enabled through the allocation of funds through the Community Safety Package.

IMPROVING VICTORIA POLICE'S TECHNOLOGICAL CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Harnessing and enhancing the technology available to Victoria Police will enable greater interconnection with the family violence sector and improve the ability to support victims and hold perpetrators to account. To do this, Victoria Police is:

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 Reviewing the Protecting Children protocol between Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services to strengthen risk management practices and enhance information sharing practices between each agency.
.....
-  Commencing planning for the deployment and use of Body Worn Cameras by frontline police and how this technology would be used in family violence situations.
.....
-  Planning for the rollout of mobile technology to support police to get access to information quickly in the field.
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PERPETRATORS ARE HELD TO ACCOUNT, ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PERPETRATOR INTERVENTIONS

The Royal Commission highlighted that there is currently an insufficient breadth and diversity of perpetrator interventions in Victoria. In response, the Government established the Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions (the Committee) in November 2016 to provide advice to the Government on the suite of programs, services and initiatives that should be available in Victoria to respond to perpetrators of family violence.

The Committee will also provide advice on the:

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+ roles and responsibilities of all government and non-government agencies that have contact with perpetrators
.....
- + principles that should inform all perpetrator interventions, and
.....
- + design, trial and evaluation of new and innovative perpetrator interventions, including those targeted to diverse communities and perpetrators with complex needs.
.....

ENSURING SUPPORT FOR MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS (MBCPS)

\$8.3 million was allocated in the 2016-17 State Budget to ensure that more men's behaviour change places were available across Victoria (including voluntary, court-mandated and corrections-based referral pathways). The Government is also working closely with No to Violence/Men's Referral Service to redevelop and update the current minimum standards for MBCPs, and to develop an MBCP service provider accreditation framework. This will ensure that the quality and standard of MBCPs and service providers in Victoria remain best practice and ensure programs practitioners remain appropriately skilled to respond to men who use family violence.

ENHANCING PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Information sharing reform will also enhance perpetrator accountability by allowing information about the perpetrator to be more easily shared, helping services to better assess risk and keep victim survivors safe.

Also, at the request of the Attorney-General, the Sentencing Advisory Council has released a discussion paper on swift, certain and fair approaches to sentencing family violence offenders for consultation.

STRENGTHENING SAFETY FOR CHILD PROTECTION PRACTITIONERS ENGAGING WITH PERPETRATORS

Strengthening the ability of child protection practitioners to engage with perpetrators of family violence includes ensuring risks created by perpetrators are appropriately assessed and managed. The Government is working to strengthen its current child protection practice guidelines to facilitate safe engagement by child protection practitioners with perpetrators.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE IS SYSTEMIC AND ENDURING

STRENGTHENED FAMILY VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The tender to redevelop the Victorian Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (the Framework), often referred to as the common risk assessment framework or CRAF, will commence in April 2017. The redeveloped Framework will facilitate more effective identification, assessment and management of family violence related risk and needs from early intervention through to recovery, across the family violence and broader service system. This will also facilitate the key related reform to multi-agency risk assessment and management and information sharing.

The redeveloped Framework will address recommendations from the Royal Commission, the Coronial Inquest into the Death of Luke Geoffrey Batty, and the Monash University review of the current Framework, as well as supporting other key whole-of-system reforms.

Government is also improving child protection practice and systems to better respond to family violence, including engaging and intervening with perpetrators, safety planning, information gathering and sharing, ahead of integration of broader information sharing and Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework reform.

SHARING INFORMATION AND WORKING MORE EFFECTIVELY INFORMATION SHARING REFORMS

In 2017 legislation has been introduced into Parliament to create a specific family violence information sharing regime. This regime will create a 'trusted zone' of organisations who can request information from each other to undertake risk assessment and risk management for victims of family violence. These laws will help keep people safer by holding perpetrators to greater account and most importantly, victim safety will trump the privacy of perpetrators, by allowing the sharing of perpetrator information without consent in family violence cases. The legislation will:

- enable relevant organisations to share information to assess or manage family violence risk
- allow information about perpetrators to be shared without their consent ensuring that safety is prioritised ahead of privacy considerations
- assist to hold perpetrators to account, and
- enable a Central Information Point to provide access to timely and accurate information to assist with risk assessment and risk management.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PANELS (RAMPS)

There are 18 RAMPs operating across Victoria, bringing together key agencies to share critical information and facilitate comprehensive risk assessment and action planning to support women and children who are at serious and imminent threat of harm as a result of family violence. The state-wide roll-out has included a comprehensive training package for family violence services, Victoria Police and other core RAMP members, as well as an information sharing platform, the RAMP Information Sharing System, which supports referrals to RAMP, meeting facilitation and action planning.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PANELS (RAMPS) CASE STUDY



The collaborative, multi-agency approach which underpins RAMPs promotes a more coordinated and integrated response to support women and children at the highest risk of harm from family violence. In one RAMP case, a Victoria Police co-chair stated that:

'The cooperation between all the partners leading up to and on the day was something I have not seen in 28 years of policing. I was in no doubt that if left unchecked, this woman would have been killed once the offender found out that she was planning to leave. Having been a co-chair since the inception of RAMP I believe we are successful because of a number of key factors:

- *The people at the table are the right people from the agencies (at the right level)*
- *We are sanctioned to share all relevant information*
- *All the players are together in the one place at the same time'.*

In this case, within two weeks of being referred to the relevant RAMP, an emergency RAMP meeting was convened. The victim survivor was considered to be at serious risk due to an escalation in the perpetrator's violent and controlling behaviour.

The victim survivor wished to leave the perpetrator and had begun preparing to move, but found it difficult to act due to the perpetrator's monitoring behaviour.

The victim survivor had an appointment with a community health service and it was agreed that this was the opportunity to act and help the victim survivor to leave. Police, the specialist family violence service and community health were briefed on the morning of the appointment.

Following the appointment, police and family violence workers met with the victim survivor at the community health centre to discuss next steps. She agreed to proceed with the separation and move out of the home with their support. Police commenced searching for the perpetrator, who was now aware that there were extra police in the area and had begun ringing the victim survivor continuously.

Family violence workers secured accommodation for the victim survivor, ensuring that her pets were immunised and put into suitable accommodation, and arranged for removalists to remove her belongings and put them into storage that afternoon.

Police and a family violence worker attended the victim survivor's home to assist her in packing her belongings, where they spoke with the perpetrator's father and other family members.

Police advised the perpetrator's father of the situation and asked him to encourage his son to hand himself in at the police station.

The family violence worker and police remained at the home until removalists arrived. The victim survivor was relocated to safe accommodation where she was able to keep her pets with her. The perpetrator handed himself in to Police and was served with a Family Violence Safety Notice.



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE ACROSS GOVERNMENT

The Victorian Government has encouraged and worked with federal counterparts to improve the support and response to those experiencing family violence, including those areas that fall within the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

In order to drive reforms which support a holistic, national response to family violence we have pursued the expansion of resourcing for Legal Services including for Victoria Legal Aid and community legal centres, through presenting a paper at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Government continues to pursue this issue, recently calling on the Commonwealth Government to reverse cuts to Victorian community legal services.

We have responded to the Commonwealth Government's consultation paper and accompanying exposure draft outlining proposed amendments to the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth), which provides the opportunity for the Victorian Government to collaborate with the Commonwealth and align reform efforts to implement the family law related recommendations from the Royal Commission.

Through a formal COAG paper in December 2016, the Victorian Government has requested the Commonwealth consider enhancing protection for migrant victims of family violence under Australian law as well as introduce paid family violence leave in the National Employment Standards.

In addition, specific action has been taken to request the Commonwealth Government consider creating a specific Medicare item number for family violence counselling and therapeutic services. On 9 December 2016, COAG agreed that the Commonwealth and Victorian health ministers will work together to determine whether gaps exist in primary health care for women experiencing domestic violence and report back to COAG. At this meeting, COAG also agreed to consider a number of the Royal Commission's recommendations requiring national agreement and cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

TIMELINE OF KEY ACTIONS

			<p>\$120 million investment for programs and projects to boost the supply of social housing.</p>	<p>The Family Violence Child Protection Partnership and a \$17.5 million program over five years that co-locates family violence workers in child protection offices across Victoria. Includes the recruitment of 17 dedicated family violence workers for child protection offices across the State, and 12 additional child protection workers to work in areas that need it most.</p>
<p>\$572 million state-wide funding over two years in the 2016-17 Victorian Budget in response to Royal Commission recommendations.</p>		<p>\$1.2 million funding boost for hospital staff to be trained to identify the signs of family violence and help patients experiencing harm to seek support.</p>	<p>\$5.65 million funding to develop further partnerships with family violence services and to prioritise family violence response to Aboriginal children and families.</p>	
<p>\$152 million investment to provide more housing options for victims of family violence.</p>	<p>\$200,000 investment to help prevent elder abuse in communities.</p>	<p>Additional Family Violence Support Packages for Women and Children available through Child FIRST and Integrated Family Services.</p>	<p>Ownership of the initial 511 public housing properties transferred to Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV). A total of 1,448 properties will be transferred to AHV, advancing the self-determination of Aboriginal people through the ownership of housing.</p>	<p>New overnight safety and supervision requirements come into effect for residential care facilities.</p>
	<p>State-wide RAMP rollout complete.</p>	<p>\$10 million to rejuvenate three rooming house properties in Ascot Vale, Flemington and St Kilda.</p>	<p>Appointment of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor.</p>	<p>Launch of the new Respectful Relationships curriculum. A new program for 120 Victorian schools to become leaders in implementing this approach.</p>
<p>APRIL</p>	<p>JUNE</p>	<p>AUGUST</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p>	<p>OCTOBER</p>

2016

Launch 10 Year Plan, *Ending Family Violence; Victoria's Plan for Change*.

\$1 million for programs which support elder victims of family violence. Gerard Mansour, Commissioner for Senior Victorians, also announced as an ambassador to give older victims of family violence a voice.

Expand three early intervention programs in Ballarat, Geelong and Frankston to put an end to young people committing family violence.

Grants of up to \$150,000 for new and existing community organisations to drive change at a local level, making women safer and stronger in their homes and workplaces.

Consultation for a memorial to honour the victims and survivors of family violence.

Launch the second year of the Victoria Against Violence campaign which is part of the United Nations led international campaign, Unite to End Violence Against Women: 16 Days of Activism.

\$109 million homelessness package to help 19,000 people at risk of or experiencing homelessness over the next five years.

\$5.5 million provided to build 20 affordable units in Newport for women and children fleeing family violence.

\$1.3 million for family violence support services at community legal centres.

\$1.75 million for specially trained financial counsellors to support victims of family violence who suffer financially at the hands of perpetrators.

Launch Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy.

\$185,000 funding boost for the state-wide Women's Information and Referral Exchange to meet demand for family violence support.

\$185 million investment to redevelop public housing properties, with an increase of at least 10 per cent in social housing.

Invest \$1.7 million in a new Risk Assessment Report Portal to replace faxed referrals that will capture more accurate information about individual cases and ensure a faster response to family violence.

\$4.6 million early intervention program will target fathers experiencing drug or alcohol abuse who have committed, or are at risk of committing family violence.

\$500,000 investment over two years to support *Women with Disabilities Victoria* to push for reforms to make family violence policies and services more inclusive of people with disabilities.

\$200,000 investment over two years to fund tailored programs – run by and for women from diverse cultural backgrounds – to bolster women's leadership and economic independence.

Funding of \$500,000 to extend family violence prevention programs – designed by Aboriginal women, for Aboriginal women.

Contributed funding to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to develop a Family Violence Data Clearinghouse. This will help identify data gaps and existing data collection practice. It will enable the comparison of data definitions and collection of methodologies used across jurisdictions in relation to Aboriginal and disability-specific family violence reporting.

Commencement of the *Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor Act 2016*.

Introduce a new program and support for women and children escaping family violence – with their pets – through a new program to house and protect at-risk animals.

Fund 40 new projects to prevent and raise awareness of family violence in Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

Leading Schools offered a place to participate in Respectful Relationships education program.

Introduce new information sharing laws to allow the sharing of information without a perpetrator's consent when related to safety matters.

Homes for Victorians: Affordability, access and choice released. Key initiatives include:

- \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund to support up to 2,200 new social housing places over the next five years.
- \$1.1 billion loan guarantee program and revolving loan facility for the community housing sector to give them the investment tools it needs to grow.
- \$33.2 million over two years to extend rental assistance to 4,000 disadvantaged Victorians, building on the \$16 million investment in 2016-17.
- \$20 million investment to upgrade rooming houses (in addition to the \$10 million invested in August 2016).
- Management transfer of 4000 public housing properties to community housing sector.

Introduce new laws responding to 11 recommendations from the Royal Commission. The Family Violence Protection Amendment Bill 2017 will increase protections for women and children, and enhance the justice system's response to family violence.

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

2017

