



Family Violence Flexible Support Package Initiative

Summary and Next Steps

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

Available at [Family Safety Victoria](http://familyviolence.vic.gov.au) <familyviolence.vic.gov.au>

Flexible Support Packages

Family violence flexible support packages provide a new individualised approach to respond to victim survivors experiencing family violence. The packages deliver a personalised and holistic response to victim survivors experiencing family violence by assisting them to access support, move out of crisis, stabilise and improve their safety, well-being and independence into recovery.

The Family Violence Flexible Support Package Initiative commenced in December 2015 with a \$12 million budget to be delivered over four years. Fifteen agencies were identified through an invited call for submissions process to deliver the initiative across the state. In September 2016 a funding boost of \$40 million over two years was announced in response to recommendation 17 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Following the announcement proportional increases were allocated to the 15 agencies and an additional four state wide agencies added taking the total investment for 2016-17 to \$20 million.

Flexible Support Package providers collect and report data on program expenditure, aligned to the program's four intended outcome areas: safety and security, health and wellbeing, capabilities to participate and connections to community and culture. Victim survivors are supported to determine the goods and services required to meet their needs. The majority of packages delivered include multiple items across outcomes areas.

The Initiative was evaluated by Effective Change Pty Ltd between August 2016 and August 2017. Family Safety Victoria received the final report in September 2017, which indicates the packages are successful in supporting individuals experiencing family violence.

The following example provided by a metro based agency highlights the multiple ways packages can be used to support a family leaving family violence.

A woman with two primary school age children left her relationship with her partner and father to the two children due to significant violence. During the relationship there were repeated family violence incidents, with police involvement and multiple intervention orders.

The family violence agency supporting the family applied for a Flexible Support Package.

A package was provided for removal costs and assistance with a bond and the first month's rent for new safe accommodation. The family received funding to assist with items required for both the children's education, including school uniforms and technological aids. To support community connection and increase engagement and social development, sporting registrations for the children were also provided.

Once the family were settled into their new accommodation counselling for the children was funded, providing necessary therapeutic support. Financial assistance was provided for the woman to access education and training to strengthen her qualifications enabling her to return to work.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation found that Flexible Support Packages are providing creative and tailored responses to victim survivors with universal support from family violence agencies delivering the packages. The evaluation data shows the initiative reached 3025 unique clients between January 2016 and March 2017.

A range of good practice is evidenced in the evaluation including a number of effective partnership approaches. These approaches improved the reach and efficacy of the initiative through the evaluation.

The evaluation identified three different types of delivery model; single agency, partnership and state wide. The single agency model involves the flexible support package provider holding and distributing all packages across their area to their own clients and clients from external agencies.

Partnership models varied, however generally involved distribution of packages by a number of agencies in the region facilitated by the lead flexible support package agency. State wide providers deliver packages to clients in specific diverse communities including CALD clients, LGBTIQ clients and Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander clients.

During the evaluation the majority of victim survivors accessing packages were women. Feedback from individuals who received a package was generally positive with some stating the support provided a life changing opportunity to become, and stay free from violence. Most women with children provided feedback that their children had also benefitted from the packages. The evaluation indicates children were given opportunities to participate in school and sporting activities, and provided with access to counselling, new toys and bedroom furniture.

During the evaluation the majority of expenditure was attributed to the safety and security outcomes. In the first quarter of 2017 almost \$1 million was allocated to packages supporting suitable and stable housing which includes items such as relocation costs, repairs to property damage and purchase of household furniture.

The data submitted to the evaluator during the course of the evaluation showed:

- 75% of all clients were parents of one or more dependent child under 18
- The clients engaged over this period of time had a total of 5,076 dependent children
- 119 clients had five or more children – between them, this group of clients had 658 children
- 10% of clients had a disability
- 71% of clients' main source of income was government payments and 3% of clients had no source of income
- 37% of clients were in private rental, 16% in public housing, 11% in emergency accommodation, 9% were home-owners and 5% of clients were in refuge or crisis accommodation
- Aboriginal clients accounted for 10% of all clients from January 2016 – March 2017. Aboriginal clients are over-represented in the client group, proportional to representation in the general community, which is 0.9% of the Victorian population based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse client participation in the initiative increased over the 15 months of data, from less than 4% of total clients in January-June 2016, to 12% of total clients in March 2017

Instead of worrying about how I could afford to buy furniture, the FSP support gave me the space to process what happened to me and the kids...to get better emotionally.

I can't express how thankful I am. The money came at the right time to give me hope and stability in my life.

Through the FSP we were able to relocate interstate to be with my parents. It changed everything – safety, stability, our health and wellbeing and independence. The kids are not afraid now. There is no way I could have done this on my own.

FSP Clients

The period of time covered by the evaluation included the significant funding boost allocated in September 2016. The final report highlighted some of the challenges funded agencies navigated in scaling up delivery of packages in their regions.

Some noted the difficulty arising from having such a significant amount of money to spend within a shortened timeframe. The time lag in upscaling and the organisational changes required was an issue for a number of agencies, particularly those who did not previously deliver flexible funds to their clients.

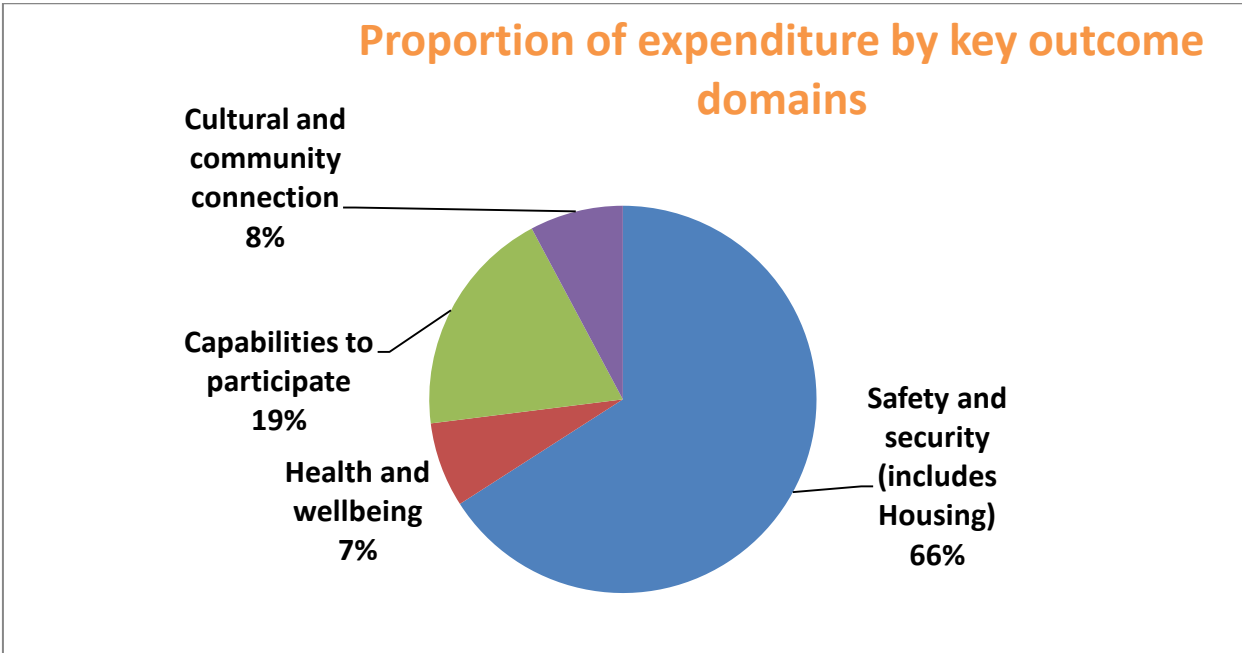
The administrative requirement of delivering packages was noted by all agencies as a challenge. For many agencies this has become less of a concern as processes have become more streamlined. There are however agencies who continue to find the level of administration support required challenging.

2016-17 data acquittal

Final acquittal data in 2016-17 showed over 5100 packages were delivered with an average spend of \$2,676. The annual data echoes the evaluation data around funding and shows the largest packages were provided to victim survivors with a disability, those at high risk, Aboriginal and CALD victim survivors and large families with six or more dependent children.

Safe and secure housing costs constituted the majority of funds delivered in 2016-17. This includes rent and bond payments, mortgage assistance and personal safety technology responses including CCTV and security upgrades.

A steady increase was seen in delivery of funds for cultural and community connection, and health and wellbeing. This supports the anecdotal evidence providers are considering the broader needs of clients and identifying needs outside of an immediate crisis response.



Evaluation final report recommendations

Set out below are the recommendations contained in the final report. Family Safety Victoria has responded to the recommendations in a variety of ways and continues to provide oversight of the initiative. Ongoing support is provided to agencies in partnership with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Local Connections and Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic).

Flexible Support Package Evaluation Recommendations	Family Safety Victoria response to recommendations
The Components of the service model should include:	
<p>A fair and equitable funding model, recalibrated against the Victoria's new Family Violence Investment</p> <p>Approach of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improved demand modelling to inform service planning and resource allocation - a consistent and transparent pricing framework that supports the delivery of quality services - improved accountability and outcomes focus <p>In order to provide the foundations for best practice in service delivery, greater transparency in funding and recognition of the investment in management and administrative resources required to implement the FSP initiative.</p>	<p>Flexible Support Package providers submitted end of financial year acquittal data in July. This increased understanding of demand and resources required across the state based upon 12 month acquittal data.</p> <p>This will inform future allocations.</p> <p>Looking forward, further work will be undertaken to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A more consistent approach to purchasing common items - Stronger accountability through the development of a customised IT platform for reporting.
A service framework which outlines the intention of the FSP initiative and clearly places the intention of the initiative – <i>to promote victim survivors' recovery and resilience, so that a previous experience of family violence does not shape their lives forever</i> – at its centre.	The Flexible Support Package Guidelines were updated in July 2017. The packages are now available for those who are at high risk, in crisis or post crisis and include those who are in recovery. This has strengthened practice and enabled agencies to provide a broader response.
Guidance for best practice, complex and consistent decision-making, which addresses the range of variation in policy and practice.	<p>The Family Violence Policy and Programs Branch, Family Safety Victoria facilitate a quarterly meeting with providers to address emerging issues. DV Vic and DHHS Local Connections attend and support this meeting.</p> <p>Interim advice and support is available through the Family Violence Policy and Programs Branch or through DHHS Local Connections at a regional level for guidance relating to complex package requests.</p>
Clear articulation of the service governance and roles and responsibilities.	The quarterly meeting with providers to address emerging issues forms part of the service governance. DV Vic and DHHS Local Connections attend and support this meeting. Interim advice and support is available through the Family Violence Policy and Program Branch or through DHHS Local Connections at a regional level.
Establishing platforms for 'knowledge to practice exchange', acknowledging that strategies must involve some sort of interaction, and that multiple strategies are more effective than just one. The	Quarterly meetings with providers act as a platform for knowledge exchange. Interim advice and support is available through the Family Violence Policy and Program Branch or through

Flexible Support Package Evaluation Recommendations	Family Safety Victoria response to recommendations
FSP network should be provided with opportunities to join together to explore practice challenges, share good practice and develop practice knowledge and expertise.	Local Connections at a regional level and DV Vic play a role in supporting the initiative in its role as Peak Body.
Development of a case practice guide to document and support the newly emerging approaches to case practice. The guide does not need to be extensive, but should capture new approaches, tips and advice for new scenarios opened by the FSP initiative.	Family Safety Victoria will capture emerging issues and circulate useful guidance as issues arise. Regular provider meetings provide opportunity to create a shared understanding around best practice.
Focus on building the evidence-base, quality and continuous improvement through refining existing data collection, and developing outcome measurement tools, appropriate application in the FSP, including meeting needs for flexibility.	Quarterly provider meetings provide opportunity to strengthen the ways agencies record data and develop practices that maintain flexibility in the delivery of packages. The development of an IT platform will strengthen Flexible Support Package program delivery and improve data collection.
Providing options for organisational models that provide local, best-fit, integrated solutions. This will involve exploring opportunities for partnerships with non-FSP RAMP providers and other 'frequent user' partners. It is recommended that all FSP providers connect with their local ACCHO to promote the FSP initiative and establish smooth referral pathways.	The state wide expansion of the Personal Safety Initiative (PSI) will strengthen links between providers and RAMP providers. The PSI local coordinators are located at RAMP agencies and will work in partnership with flexible package providers to deliver personal safety responses. Work continues to identify partnerships to increase access for diverse communities recognising the additional barriers
It is further recommended that the DHHS consider options to provide equitable support to larger families (five or more children), either through a 'family' FSP option, or providing more flexibility with the package limit.	Advice and support is available through the Family Violence Policy and Program Branch when providers are assisting larger families. The guidelines were updated in July 2017 to address the needs of children in their own right.

Next Steps: Delivery of the Flexible Support Package Initiative in 2017-18

In July 2017 \$20.52 million was allocated to Flexible Support Package agencies for delivery in 2017-18.

Since the evaluation, modifications to the Flexible Support Package Guidelines have been made which respond to a number of the recommendations. These changes came into effect in July 2017.

The significant changes include:

- increased eligibility criteria to include responses to those who are attempting to stabilise in recovery from family violence
- an increase in the maximum package amount from \$7,000 to \$10,000
- access for children to a package in their own right as part of their individual case plan

At the most recent provider meeting, agencies provided positive feedback on the initiative and how it continues to revolutionise their approach to supporting victim survivors. Changes to the guidelines have alleviated some of the issues faced by agencies. For example access to a personal safety response for clients is now more accessible with the increase in funding available; and clients can access a package once they have moved out of crisis to support their recovery. Support for the initiative remains strong with agencies committed to the ongoing delivery of packages, and to finding ways to improve the efficiency and reach of packages in their region.

Agencies have streamlined their processes and are more confident in delivering packages efficiently. The initial upscale required to deliver packages has been achieved and agencies have the necessary infrastructure to administer the funds.

The Diversity, Strategy and Engagement Branch within Family Safety Victoria work on improving the responsiveness of family violence interventions for individuals from diverse communities. The three state wide agencies delivering packages to diverse communities received an increase in their allocation to further support equal access to packages.

Flexible packages are available to all victim survivors of family violence and agencies report they are receiving applications for packages from a diverse group of providers. Data received from agencies delivering packages indicate a broad range of clients are accessing the packages to meet their immediate and longer term needs. This is an area which will continue to be supported as the initiative develops.

The Family Violence Policy and Program Unit in partnership with Domestic Violence Victoria will continue to facilitate provider meetings on a quarterly basis. These meetings provide opportunity to share good practice and identify ways to manage challenging and complex issues that arise. Ad hoc advice and guidance is available to enable a consistent approach to package allocation.

