ENDING FAMILY VIOLENCE
VICTORIA'S PLAN FOR CHANGE

VICTORIA
State Government

Family violence services and support

If you have experienced violence or sexual assault and require immediate or ongoing assistance, **contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)** to talk to a counsellor from the National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline. For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps' 24/7 family violence response line on **1800 015 188**. If you are concerned for your safety or that of someone else, please contact the police in your state or territory, or **call 000** for emergency assistance.

Aboriginal Acknowledgment

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the first peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on an incredibly disciplined social and cultural order. This social and cultural order has sustained up to 50,000 years of existence. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in addressing, and preventing family violence and join with our First Peoples to eliminate family violence from all communities.

I just hope that in the future our children can see through the eyes of children. I just hope that my granddaughter has a better future.

– Victim survivor

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PREMIER'S FOREWORD

Last year, tens of thousands of Victorians were the victims of violence in the home, committed by their loved ones.

Family violence took the lives of 45 people in 2015-16.

Make no mistake: this is our number one law and order challenge, and we cannot go on like this.

That's why we established Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence and that's why we are implementing every single one of its 227 recommendations.

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change outlines how we will deliver these recommendations and build a future where all Victorians live free from family violence, and where women and men are treated equally and respectfully.

The Plan was recommended by the Royal Commission. It is focused on outcomes. It makes clear our resolute determination to end the murders and keep our children safe, to support victim survivors and stop them falling into homelessness, to build strong and resilient families, and ensure perpetrators are held to account and are brought to justice if they reoffend.

Most importantly, we must change community attitudes towards women if we are to prevent violence from happening in the first place.

After all, how can anyone deny that family violence is a gendered crime, if women are overwhelmingly its victims?

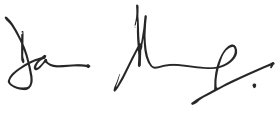
In the past, governments have not done enough to protect vulnerable women and children from family violence. This Plan changes that.

It aligns with our other reforms including the *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children*, the Gender Equality Strategy, and housing and homelessness reforms.

This Plan commits us to a decade-long agenda of action and investment to protect victims, punish the guilty, and change community attitudes.

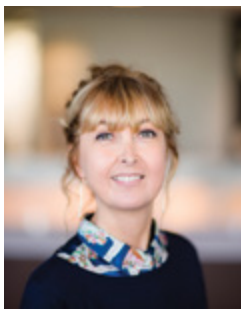
We will do this in partnership with all Victorians. We will listen to those who have lived in the shadow of family violence and the dedicated individuals who work in the sector.

Together, we can free Victoria from the tragedy of family violence.



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria

PARTNERS IN DELIVERING CHANGE



Fiona McCormack
Co-Chair
Family Violence
Steering Committee

Message from the Family Violence Steering Committee

When the Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down its report, a sense of hope began to build.

Many of us have worked for years in a constrained and under-resourced system.

We understand what it means to look family members in the eye when their daughters, sons, mothers, and children are killed. And we know that the non-physical forms and impacts of family violence have profound effects on the health and wellbeing of victim survivors.

Perhaps now we can start to allow ourselves to imagine a society free of violence.

We have worked together before; we have worked with governments before. But in coming together as Victoria's Family Violence Steering Committee, we sense a renewed energy and focus; this could be the turning point Victoria has been waiting for.

We know that in order to address family violence in the community there needs to be a trusted partnership between the family violence sector, community sector, government and the community—working together to implement all the Royal Commission's reforms.

We will work in partnership with the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our society to find solutions and community-led responses. Together we will work to strengthen families and communities.

This is an incredible opportunity.

Family violence is preventable. A key focus on prevention must be central to our response.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence helped to identify important gaps, such as the absence of children's voices and the need to better respond to the richness of Victoria's diverse communities.

Victorian families are diverse and come in many forms and we acknowledge that violence in all its forms occurs in all types of family situations. The new system will be designed for this diversity.

We are working with victim survivors to create a less fragmented system, built to share the burden and tilt the focus to the perpetrator of violence. Specialist expertise will be embedded into services across the state.

A victim survivor's right to safety will supersede a perpetrator's right to privacy, enabling information to be shared across the system in new and potentially transforming ways.

Perpetrators must be held accountable by the whole community and we must focus our attention on their behaviour and its impact.

These significant changes are complex and evolving, but we are determined to see them through to build an enduring model for the future.

We stand with all Victorians to end family violence.

This core aim must transcend politics and political cycles.

This is generational reform.

The Family Violence Steering Committee provides advice and leadership to government on the family violence reform agenda. The committee includes representatives from victim survivors, the family violence sector, community organisations, legal services, courts, police, state and local government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Rosie Batty
Chair
Victim Survivors'
Advisory Council

Message from the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council

The Victim Survivors' Advisory Council includes representatives from a variety of age groups, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds who share the traumatic lived experience of family violence. As victims of family violence we have been betrayed of our personal power, our voices and our safety.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recognises that there is great power in the lived experience of victims and survivors and that sharing our stories is important. Our voices are now at the heart of the reform agenda.

Silencing victims protects the perpetrator, condones their behaviour and robs victims and survivors of their dignity. This is the time to hear our voices and break the silence. The Victorian Government has recognised that by working together we can create systems that support people who are affected by family violence.

We know what it's like to be ignored. We know what it's like to experience system shortcomings. We know what it's like to be victim blamed.

Yet the painful reality of the family violence which we have endured is that it can happen to anyone, regardless of their cultural, ethnic and socio-economic background. We know this. We feel this.

It is everybody's business to break the silence and meet victim survivors with compassion and empathy. At the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, we are leading the way. Our most vulnerable days are behind us and we are driving cultural change.

THE VICTIM SURVIVORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTS A VARIETY OF AGE GROUPS, CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS WHO SHARE THE TRAUMATIC LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Some voices have been permanently silenced. To those who have died through family violence, our community apologises for failing you. We do this work in your honour.

We represent all ages, genders and demographics, from children and adolescents, the Aboriginal community, to culturally and ethnically diverse communities, people with a disability, LGBTI communities, and elders. Our drive, passion and voices are jointly dedicated to contributing as a powerful group to ending family violence.

Historically, victims of family violence have been failed by systemic shortcomings and cultural attitudes that have enabled our plight and caused us to suffer silently.

That stops now.

Our voices represent all of us—those impacted by family violence, and those for whom the system must improve to keep us safe.

We are the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council and we are here to make a difference.

The Victim Survivors' Advisory Council brings the strength, resilience and lived experiences of victim survivors to our reforms.

LANGUAGE IN THIS PLAN

At its core, family violence is a **deeply gendered issue** rooted in the structural inequalities and an imbalance of power between women and men. This recognition underpins our vision and the gendered language used throughout this document.

We refer to the people, including children and young people, who have experienced family violence as **victim survivors**. We were guided in using this term by members of the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council. We recognise that not every person who has experienced or is experiencing family violence identifies with this term. Family violence is only one part of a victim survivor's life and it does not define who they are. Our use of the term acknowledges the strength and resilience shown by victim survivors who have experienced or currently live with family violence.

The word **family** has many different meanings. Our use of the word 'families' is all-encompassing and acknowledges the variety of relationships and structures that can make up a family unit and the range of ways family violence can be experienced, including through family-like or carer relationships.

Throughout this document, the term **Aboriginal** is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms 'Koori', 'Koorie' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Diversity within the Victorian population is increasing as people express multiple forms of identity and belonging. Diverse groups frequently contend with intersectional risks when experiencing family violence. **Intersectionality** describes how characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or age, can interact on multiple levels to create overlapping forms of discrimination and power imbalances which compounds the risk of experiencing family violence.

We use the term **perpetrator** to describe people who use family violence. The aim is to ensure safety, accountability and to end the individual's use of violence.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence occurs when a perpetrator exercises power and control over another person. It involves coercive and abusive behaviours by the perpetrator that are designed to intimidate, humiliate, undermine and isolate; resulting in fear and insecurity. It covers a wide spectrum of conduct that involves an escalating spiral of violence. These behaviours can include physical and sexual abuse, as well as psychological, emotional, cultural, spiritual and financial abuse.

Although every experience is unique, family violence is not a one-off incident for most victim survivors. It is a pattern of behaviour that can occur over a long period of time. It does not always end when the victim ends the relationship—this period can be a very dangerous time as there is a heightened risk that the violence will escalate.

While both men and women can be perpetrators or victims of family violence, overwhelmingly the majority of victims are women and children, and the majority of perpetrators are men. The most common and pervasive instances of family violence occur in intimate (current or former) partner relationships, perpetrated by men against women.

At its core, family violence is rooted in the inequality between women and men. This environment fosters discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that condone violence and allow it to occur. For this reason, addressing gender inequality and discrimination is at the heart of preventing family violence, and other forms of violence against women such as non-intimate partner sexual assault.

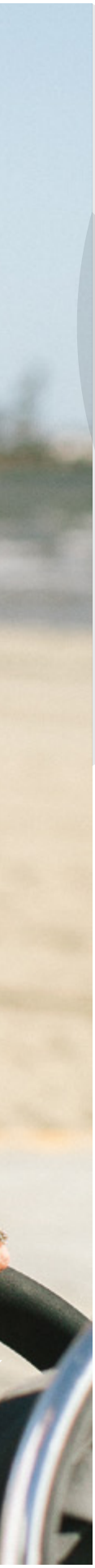
Family violence can take many forms. It can occur within extended families, kinship networks, intergenerational relationships and through family-like or carer relationships. Intimate partners, family members and non-family carers can perpetrate violence against people with a disability. Young people can use violence or be victims of violence within their family. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex (LGBTI) people may experience violence in their relationships or from family members.

Elder abuse can be perpetrated by adult children of the victim or non-family carers. Women and girls from diverse cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds experience distinct forms of family violence including migration-related abuse.

In an Aboriginal context, contributing factors around family violence include the history of colonisation, dispossession of land and culture and the wrongful removal of children from their parents. Family violence is not part of Aboriginal culture, but intergenerational grief and trauma has resulted in the over-representation of Aboriginal people as victim survivors.

Children and young people are also victims of family violence. Whether they experience violence directly, or are witnesses to violence, the resulting trauma can affect their emotional and psychological wellbeing. This in turn negatively affects their learning and development and can impact upon their future outcomes.

At the centre of all instances of family violence are the individual and structural power imbalances. To address this, we need to create a society founded on equality and inclusion.



OVERVIEW

ENDING FAMILY VIOLENCE: VICTORIA'S PLAN FOR CHANGE SETS OUT OUR SHARED VISION OF A FUTURE WHERE ALL VICTORIANS ARE SAFE, THRIVING AND LIVE FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change outlines how we will achieve the vision of a Victoria free from family violence by implementing all 227 recommendations of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. The 10 Year Plan was recommended by the Royal Commission and details the outcomes of our family violence reforms and the initial targets by which we will measure our progress. These will galvanise action to transform how we prevent and respond to family violence.

The Plan lays out an ambitious agenda over the next decade. The progress of this agenda and the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations can be tracked online at **vic.gov.au/familyviolenceplan**.

As a next step, in March 2017, we will deliver a **10-Year Investment Plan** and our first **Rolling Action Plan** with the concrete actions and investment to implement our reforms. In addition, we will deliver a **Primary Prevention Strategy** in 2017 to outline our renewed focus on preventing family violence from occurring in the first place through education, community awareness and targeted programs. Victoria's Primary Prevention Strategy will be Australia's first dedicated, funded and enduring primary prevention plan to end family violence.

All of these reforms will be designed and delivered in partnership with the Victorian community.

Since June 2016, victim survivors, family violence providers, children's services, legal services, police, courts, state and local government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations have come together as the Family Violence Steering Committee to guide and inform the development of our reform agenda.

The Victim Survivors' Advisory Council brings the lived experiences of victims to our reforms and provides an ongoing voice for victim survivors on how the system and services should be designed. A range of other consultative bodies have also been established to drive parts of our reform agenda.

Our family violence reforms will build on the foundations of the *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples and Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*, which provides community-led approaches to addressing family violence in Aboriginal communities. The Victorian Government is committed to continuing this community-led response alongside broader system reforms. We acknowledge and respect the unique knowledge, skills and expertise of Aboriginal people.

The scale and breadth of the reforms outlined in this Plan are unprecedented. They will bring about enduring change that prevents family violence, puts victim survivors at the centre of our response, keeps children safe and holds perpetrators to account.

10 YEAR PLAN SUMMARY

THE OUTCOMES

Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated.

Victim survivors, vulnerable children and families, are safe and supported to recover and thrive.

Perpetrators are held to account, engaged and connected.

Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.

OUR TARGETS

No woman or child is killed as a result of family violence.

All Victorians will believe that family violence and gender inequality are unacceptable, and will hold attitudes that support respectful relationships.

Victim survivors will be supported to remain safely in their homes and connected to their community.

More women and children at risk of family violence will be able to access effective early interventions.

The overall number of Child Protection re-reports that lead to a substantiation will be significantly reduced.

Family violence recidivism will be eliminated.

Workers in universal services will feel confident to identify and respond to all forms of family violence.

PREVENTION

A Primary Prevention Strategy to change attitudes and behaviours so that family violence is not acceptable or excusable in any circumstance. **A Prevention Agency with dedicated funding** will be established to strengthen our focus on prevention across the system. **A Gender Equality Strategy** will set out how we will work to build a fair and equal Victoria. The statewide roll out of **Respectful Relationships**, will equip students and staff to deal with issues of violence, equality and respect.

ACCESS TO HOUSING

Our first priority is to ensure the safety of women and children so they can remain in their homes should they wish to do so. Where this is not possible, we will ensure victims are rapidly rehoused in safe, secure and stable housing by diversity assistance. We are **investing over $600m** to develop and upgrade social housing, boost crisis accommodation and homelessness services, redevelop refuges, and provide private rental assistance.

NEW LAWS

Changes to the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, will make intervention orders more victim friendly and tighten up the bail process. Legislative changes will create **a specific family violence information sharing regime**, which will mean a person's safety will trump a perpetrator's right to privacy.

SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS

A network of Support and Safety Hubs will provide people with access to the support they want and need to be safe, recover and thrive. Hubs will be accessible and respectful of personal and community values. They will work with people and families to understand their risk, needs and preferences, and to plan the best response. The Hubs will do the hard work to coordinate support, so people aren't left to manage risk and other problems alone.

COORDINATION AGENCY

A new Coordination Agency will support more effective coordination and management of family violence, justice and social services across government. The Agency will establish and oversee the operation of the Support and Safety Hubs

OUR VISION: A FUTURE WHERE ALL VICTORIANS ARE SAFE, THRIVING AND LIVE FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

NAVIGATORS

Victim survivors will not have to navigate the complex legal and community services systems by themselves. **Service navigators will be highly skilled specialist workers** that will have the flexibility and capacity to support people from crisis through to recovery, and ensure they are supported in a simple, timely and coordinated way that works for them.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

We will intervene earlier to prevent harm to children and enable families to access effective support services. By integrating ChildFIRST into the Hubs, the Hubs will become a key platform for keeping children safe. Children's services will be therapeutic, child friendly and safe. Child and family services will be able to better engage and work with vulnerable parents.

PARTNERSHIPS

We are **working together with victim survivors and family violence experts**, who are leading, guiding and informing a new system. **We are also working with Aboriginal communities** to embed culturally relevant and effective approaches to addressing family violence. This is about making sure all Victorians have an opportunity to be part of the change.

KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

The safety of victims, including children, will be the priority of family violence services. Safety will be prioritised through the **redevelopment of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (CRAF)**, the new information sharing regime, and the Central Information Point. Immediate access to one of the **18 Risk Management Assessment Panels (RAMPS)** will be provided for women and children at greatest risk.

SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE COURTS

Expanding Specialist Family Violence Courts across the state will improve victim access to legal protection and help hold perpetrators to account. **Courts will be upgraded** to provide greater safety and security for victim survivors.

CENTRAL INFORMATION POINT

A team of representatives from key government agencies will work together to gather and share information so that victims are safe.

This information will be used by the Support and Safety Hubs and other family violence service providers. Risk assessment will be ongoing and better informed about the whole picture of a perpetrator.

POLICE

The role of police will be transformed so family violence becomes a core part of their business. **A new Victoria Police Family Violence Centre of Learning** will train police officers and improve family violence-related capability. **The roll out of body worn cameras and mobile devices** will equip police with modern tools. **Faxes will be replaced** with a new digital tool so Victoria Police can electronically send Risk Assessment and Management Reports to Support and Safety Hubs and other partner organisations.

PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY

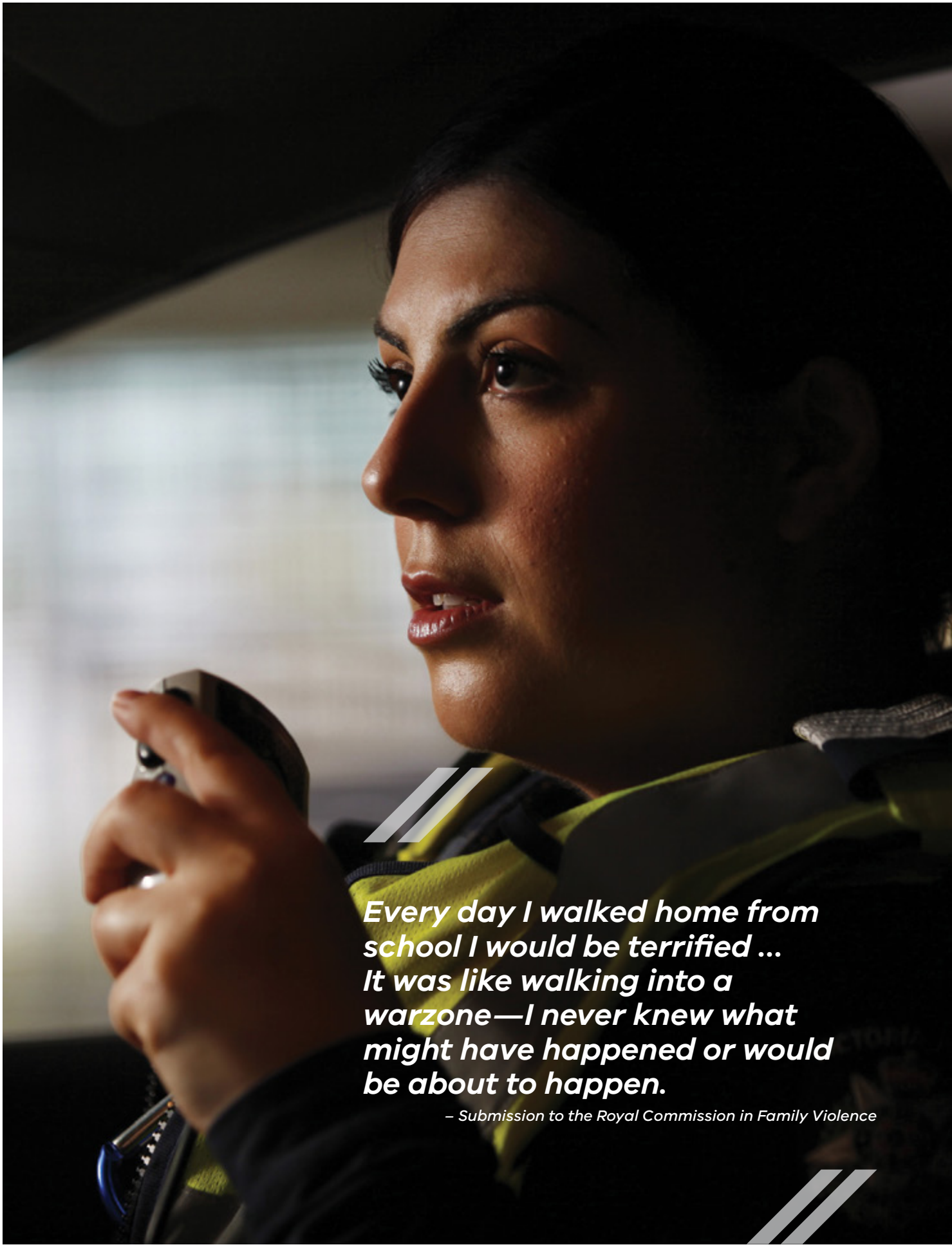
We have **established an Expert Advisory Committee** to advise on the most effective interventions for perpetrators. The advice from this Committee will assist us in making changes to existing programs and **expanding the kinds of perpetrator interventions** we are offering.

CENTRE FOR WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

A new Centre for Workforce Excellence will recognise and embed family violence specialist expertise, support the family violence workforce to grow and over time create the world's preeminent social services workforce.

DATA INSIGHTS

Supporting departments and agencies to **build data analytics capability** and improve the way they collect and share information.


Every day I walked home from school I would be terrified ... It was like walking into a warzone—I never knew what might have happened or would be about to happen.
– Submission to the Royal Commission in Family Violence

1 THE URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE

FAMILY VIOLENCE SHATTERS LIVES. IT INFLICTS PHYSICAL INJURY, PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND EMOTIONAL SUFFERING THAT IMPACTS VICTIMS FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES. AT ITS MOST HEINOUS, FAMILY VIOLENCE IS THE CAUSE OF SENSELESS DEATHS.

Family violence can happen to anyone, and it knows no socio-economic or cultural boundaries. While it is overwhelmingly experienced by women and children, it can be experienced in a variety of ways and through a range of different relationships. This includes Aboriginal people; people with a disability; people from diverse cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds; LGBTI people; older people; people who work in the sex industry; young people; people in prison or exiting prison and people living in rural, regional or remote areas.

Recognising the prevalence and severity of family violence, the Victorian Government launched Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence in February 2015. The Royal Commission was tasked with finding solutions to prevent family violence, better support victim survivors, and hold perpetrators to account. The Royal Commission undertook community consultations with over 800 Victorians, held 25 days of public hearings, and received almost 1,000 written submissions.

In March 2016 it concluded its work and provided a 2,082 page report to the Victorian Government. The Royal Commission acknowledged there had been significant reform in Victoria over the previous 15 years.

However, the Royal Commission described in detail a system that was failing to keep victim survivors safe. It identified gaps and obstacles to effective programs, laws and policies. The Royal Commission also found:

- A system overwhelmed by demand. All parts of the system are struggling to cope with the significant increase in people reporting incidents of family violence. This compromises the quality of the services people receive and can undermine the safety of victim survivors.
- Too little effort in preventing the occurrence of family violence and intervening at the earliest possible opportunity.

- The range of services a victim survivor needs to keep them safe and recover are often not well coordinated including at times of crisis and recovery.
- Methods for sharing information between agencies are inadequate and undermine the safety of victim survivors.
- Efforts to hold perpetrators to account are grossly insufficient leaving victim survivors with the burden of managing risk.
- A lack of resources that meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced family violence.
- Not enough focus on helping victim survivors recover from the effects of family violence so they can rebuild their lives.
- A lack of targeted and mainstream responses to meet the intersectional needs of diverse communities.
- Insufficient investment in culturally appropriate prevention and response services for Aboriginal communities.
- Staff in universal systems (such as health services and schools) are not adequately skilled, equipped and supported to recognise family violence or do not know how to respond when it is disclosed or identified.
- The current approach to funding is piecemeal, inflexible and short term, characterised by a lack of supporting evidence and evaluation. Providers are often caught in red tape which constrains their ability to innovate.

The Royal Commission's findings and its 227 recommendations provided the starting point for significant changes across health, justice and social service systems to ensure a coordinated, integrated and effective response to family violence.

It is the prevalence and the all-encompassing awareness that you are living with something that is dangerous—life threatening. That fact slowly and methodically eats away at your self-awareness and ability to make decisions. All your decisions are about self-preservation and how safe you are from day to day and hour to hour. That is why you stay. It is safer to stay than to leave.

– Anonymous Submission
to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE

FAMILY VIOLENCE IS PERVASIVE AND THE IMPACTS ARE DEVASTATING

More than 78,012 family incidents were reported to Victoria Police in 2015-16, a figure which has increased by over 45.3 per cent since 2012.

Sexual assault is a common form of family violence. In 2012, 27 per cent of sexual assault victims identified being sexually assaulted by a family member, including a current or former partner. Technology can be used by perpetrators to control, intimidate, stalk and harass victims and is a rapidly growing problem.

Family violence is the single largest cause of homelessness for women. Those escaping it are vulnerable to unemployment and a cycle of poverty.

FAMILY VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE

Family violence is not an inevitable social problem.

By addressing the complex factors that drive and reinforce family violence we can prevent it from happening in the first place. We can also prevent it from manifesting or escalating by identifying people who are at greater risk. For those who have already experienced violence, we can prevent it from happening again.

THE DRIVERS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ARE COMPLEX

To eliminate family violence, we must act on those factors which lead to it happening in the first place.

A number of gendered drivers have been shown to be most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women. These include condoning violence against women; rigid gender roles and stereotyped views of what it means to be a man or a woman; and interactions between men that emphasise or condone aggression or disrespect towards women. Factors such as financial pressures, alcohol and drug abuse, and social and economic exclusion also increase the risk of violence occurring.

FAMILY VIOLENCE IS A DEEPLY GENDERED ISSUE

1 in 3 Australian women over the age of 15 has experienced physical or sexual violence and/or emotional abuse by an intimate partner.

Most of the family violence that occurs in Victoria is perpetrated by men against women and children.

Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 18 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor. However, prevalence statistics alone do not demonstrate the extent of the gendered nature of violence. Of all victims, both female and male, who have reported experiencing violence since the age of 15, around 95 per cent had experienced violence from a male perpetrator. Women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of intimate partner violence, and are five times more likely to report fearing for their lives.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNACKNOWLEDGED VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

In 2015-16, family violence concerns were indicated in 47.5 per cent of reports to child protection, and 68.7 per cent of substantiated reports to child protection.

When family violence occurs in the home, children are often present. Exposure to family violence can have profound long-term effects on their development and increases the risks of mental health, behavioural and learning difficulties. Where pregnant women experience family violence, it can have a significant impact on unborn children. Children may be going to school hungry, tired and without having done their homework due to a disruptive home environment. Feelings of shame and powerlessness can result in isolation and exclusion.

SOME GROUPS ARE AT GREATER RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence can be less visible and less understood for people of diverse backgrounds. Individuals within these groups may face additional barriers in seeking and receiving support.

These groups include Aboriginal people; people with a disability; people from diverse cultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds; LGBTI people; older people; people who work in the sex industry; people in prison or exiting prison and people living in rural, regional or remote areas.

People in these groups, particularly women and children, are at greater risk of experiencing family violence than the general population, and may also experience family violence in unique ways. For example, up to one in 20 older people experience family violence, quite often in the form of financial abuse.

Discriminatory attitudes such as sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism or discrimination toward people with disabilities can mean that when violence takes place, it is less likely to be taken seriously or acted upon. These attitudes can also give perpetrators a reason to believe they'll get away with it.

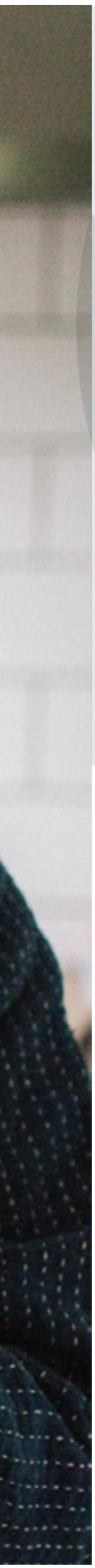
ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE SEVERELY IMPACTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE

Aboriginal women are 25 times more likely to be killed or injured as a result of family violence.

88 per cent of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care have experienced family violence.

For child protection reports relating to Aboriginal children, family violence concerns were indicated in 53.2 per cent of reports, and 74.4 per cent of substantiated reports.

It is likely the available data does not reflect the actual frequency of family violence due to the under reporting of family violence in Aboriginal communities. Those that commit family violence against Aboriginal women come from all backgrounds.



2 OUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION'S REPORT, THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ACTED QUICKLY TO ACCEPT ALL 227 RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED, TOGETHER WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CORONIAL INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF LUKE BATTY.

BOOSTING FUNDING

In April 2016, we announced a $572 million package to start delivering 65 of the Royal Commission's most urgent recommendations. This is the largest single investment by any state, territory or federal government to address and prevent family violence.

The two-year funding package extends across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities and provides more crisis housing, support services for children and specialist services for Aboriginal Victorians. It also supports programs to promote respect, equality and safety in the community and schools.

The 2016–17 Victorian State Budget made further investments to improve our response to family violence. This included $227.2 million for police mobile technology and body-worn cameras so that Victoria Police members have the tools they need when responding to family violence incidents, and a $58.1 million investment in court safety and security upgrades.

OUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

PREVENTION

Respectful Relationships

- Statewide rollout in 2017
- Professional learning and development for 120 leading schools to champion the program
- Evaluated the trial of the Respectful Relationship program in 19 Victorian schools

Launched prevention projects for Aboriginal, LGBTI and culturally diverse communities

Statewide consultations to help inform Victoria's first ever gender equality strategy

SPECIALIST SUPPORT

$87m funding boost

Increased support for victim survivors through sexual assault and financial counselling

At least **9000 women and children** to benefit in 2016/17

Expanded capacity for Safe Steps 24/7 crisis response

Increased funding for the Men's Referral Service to provide telephone counselling and referrals for men seeking help for violent and controlling behaviour

Expansion of Sexually Abusive Behaviours Treatment services, including extending the program to young people aged 15-17 years

$5m for 1100 women and children to access counselling

WORKFORCE

Completed roll-out of Risk Assessment and Management Panels with **18 operational across the state**

Reviewed and redeveloping Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework

Established an Industry Taskforce for advice on industry planning and workforce/sector reforms

Trained 500 staff in hospitals to better identify and respond to family violence

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

$122m Targeted & integrated services for children

Expansion of ChildFIRST and Integrated Family Services to support over **600 additional families**

Establish the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group

Launched a training program for child protection practitioners to improve their understanding about the nature and dynamics of family violence, **24 programs have already taken place in 2016**

Increased therapeutic support for children exposed to family violence

17 Specialist family violence workers co-located with Child Protection

Developing **more culturally responsive Maternal and Child Health Services** for Aboriginal families

DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Allocated additional funding to provide specialist family violence services to culturally diverse women and children

Initiated the expansion of inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence to provide targeted and culturally-appropriate services across rural, regional and remote Victoria

Provided funding support for Seniors Rights Victoria to work with local communities across Victoria in addressing elder abuse and promoting empowerment of older people

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Allocated $152m in an initial housing blitz package and $109m to help people at risk or experiencing homelessness, including people impacted by family violence. This includes:

- Additional and upgraded crisis accommodation
- Rapid housing assistance for those in need
- Increasing long-term housing options through purchasing and headleasing social housing properties
- Identifying four refuges for redevelopment
- Expanding the Flexible Support Packages

Established the Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Taskforce to oversee a process designed to remove blockages in access to crisis accommodation and examine stronger models to prevent homelessness

JUSTICE RESPONSE

$58.1m upgrades to Magistrates' Courts so they are safer for people

Increased funding and access for Men's behaviour change programs so **an extra 1400 men can access** them

Sought **advice from the Sentencing Advisory Council** regarding swift and certain approaches for family violence offenders in sentencing

Increased family violence duty lawyer services across 23 Community Legal Centres

Funded the Judicial College of Victoria to develop materials on family violence dynamics for the judiciary, and deliver family violence education programs for Magistrates

Provided funding to develop a restorative justice pilot program

Increased funding to Victoria Legal Aid to provide family violence legal assistance

Tender issued for police mobile devices

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Established the Family Violence Steering Committee and the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council to put the experience of experts and victim survivors at the heart of developing our reforms

Called for urgent national action to address family violence including improving federal funding arrangements

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

$25.7m working in partnership with Aboriginal communities

Developing a holistic healing model for Aboriginal people

Progressed Koori Family Violence Police Protocols

Increased funding for Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Services

Engaged with Aboriginal Victorians through the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, Aboriginal Justice Forum, Aboriginal Children's Forum as well as monthly Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Groups and Aboriginal Family Violence Co-Design Forums

It's important that we can see an end to this, it's not just about perpetuating a system that will be there forever more, it is actually about finding ways to stop the violence happening in the first place, so that when we look back on this time we think 'this is the moment where we made a difference'.
– *Community conversations*

3

OUR VISION

A FUTURE WHERE ALL VICTORIANS ARE SAFE, THRIVING AND LIVE FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Victorians want a future in which everyone lives free from family violence. A society based on gender equality, where all Victorians are treated with respect and share equal opportunities. Victoria is ready for this change and committed to make it happen.

Victorians have created this vision together. Community conversations were held across the state so that everyone—from victim survivors, the services that support them, and members of the community—could contribute to our vision.

A Victoria without family violence will be one in which:

- Women and men, girls and boys, are treated equally with respect and dignity.
- All parts of the community are engaged in practical and creative ways to learn about respectful, safe and equitable relationships.
- Women and children are resourced, supported and empowered to make decisions regarding their safety and wellbeing.
- All Victorians feel safe and empowered to take a stand against family violence.

Victorians want an enduring family violence system that will keep women and children safe. It will uphold the best interests of children and young people as paramount and protect them from harm.

It will focus on preventing violence before it starts by addressing the structures, norms and practices that drive violence against women, including challenging social norms and attitudes about women and men, girls and boys. It will support the choices of victim survivors. It will respond to people of all ages, cultures, faiths, sexualities and genders affected by family violence. It is a system which is tilted to safety and accountability. No longer will victim survivors carry the burden of securing their own safety.

Perpetrators will be held to account. There will be no hiding or making excuses for violent behaviour. Evidence-based interventions for perpetrators will be supported. Perpetrators will take responsibility for their actions and for changing their behaviour.

HOLDING OURSELVES TO ACCOUNT

Our vision is a long-term one and will take many years of sustained effort. A focus on the outcomes that align with this vision will drive our actions. The Family Violence Outcomes Framework clearly outlines Victoria's priorities in preventing and responding to family violence, why these priorities matter and what constitutes success in achieving these outcomes.

FAMILY VIOLENCE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY ARE NOT TOLERATED

All Victorians experience respectful relationships underpinned by human rights and gender equality—healthy relationship behaviours are celebrated and promoted.

Victorians do not tolerate family violence—family violence reporting rates reflect increased confidence in the system and intolerance of family violence, and eventually reflect sustained effort in prevention.

Victorians hold beliefs and attitudes that reject gender inequality and family violence—people recognise and reject all forms of family violence and gender inequality, and know how to challenge it when they see it. Individuals and systems do not minimise or deny family violence or blame victims, and stigma and discrimination is addressed.

Women and men, and girls and boys are equal—gender inequalities where people live, work, learn and play are diminished.

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

Early intervention prevents escalation—people, including children and young people, at risk of witnessing or experiencing family violence are identified early and provided with effective early interventions.

Families are safe and strong—the system intervenes early to prevent harm to children and young people and enables families to access effective support services when they need them.

Victim survivors are safe—the system takes responsibility for managing risk, instead of placing the onus on victim survivors, including children and young people.

Victim survivors are heard and in control—victim survivors, including children and young people, are always listened to, believed and understood, and supported to take control of their immediate situation and make decisions about their future.

Victim survivors rebuild lives and thrive—disruption is minimised for victim survivors, including children and young people, with safe and secure housing, finances, employment, education and recovery from trauma available for as long as people need it.

PERPETRATORS ARE HELD TO ACCOUNT, ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

Early intervention prevents escalation—people, including children and young people, at risk of using family violence are identified early and provided with effective early interventions.

Perpetrators are accountable for their behaviour—people are supported to recognise factors contributing to their violent behaviours and provided with tools and strategies to act differently, preventing reoffending.

Perpetrators are held to account—perpetrators of family violence face timely and appropriate consequences.

Perpetrators are in view—perpetrators are engaged and connected to relevant agencies. Collaborative approaches and information sharing infrastructure support systemic responsibility for holding perpetrators to account.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE IS SYSTEMIC AND ENDURING

Initiatives to respond to family violence are accessible and available in the right place at the right time. Prevention activities are coordinated and universal—the support system is easy to navigate and services are available to people when and where they need them, at all times of the day and night. Prevention activities occur across all key settings.

Initiatives to respond to family violence are person-centred—services are personalised, flexible, culturally relevant and reflect individual and family choices, need and circumstances, particularly for diverse communities and those with complex needs.

The system is united, integrated and joined-up—services work together and share information to provide a coordinated quality response to people and families, informed by dynamic risk assessment and sensitive to people's diverse needs. The system supports effective and evidence based prevention efforts.

The workforce is properly recognised and effectively responds, understands risk and need and is skilled to prevent family violence—the workforce is supported through new career pathways, fair conditions and a commitment to enhanced wellbeing and safety, and is skilled to meet people's diverse needs.

The Family Violence Outcomes Framework will be a tangible tool to keep us accountable. Every part of our reform will link back to the framework. Measuring outcomes will provide evidence of what works—and what doesn't—in delivering real and meaningful change. This will ensure that we focus reform efforts on the actions that make a difference and it will drive evidence-informed practice.

The framework will be further developed prior to the release of the first Rolling Action Plan in March 2017. We will work to define indicators of success for each of the four domains with clear measures and targets to track progress.

This next level of development will also provide an opportunity to track how our reforms are working for people from diverse communities.

We have identified the initial targets that represent our commitment for change. Progress towards these targets will tell us that we are addressing the gaps and barriers in the current system. As we progress the reforms and improve data systems, we will supplement these targets with other measures. This will give Victorians the confidence that we are moving in the right direction.

MEASURES FOR LONG-TERM TARGETS

INTERIM TARGET	LONG TERM TARGET	ULTIMATE OUTCOME
Family violence reporting rates increase, reflecting increased confidence in the system and intolerance of family violence.	No woman or child is killed as a result of family violence.	ALL VICTORIANS ARE SAFE, THRIVING AND LIVE FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE
More Victorians recognise the various forms of family violence, including emotional, psychological, physical, sexual and financial abuse.	All Victorians believe that family violence and gender inequality are unacceptable, and hold attitudes that support respectful relationships.	FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY ARE NOT TOLERATED
All women and children who experience family violence will be able to access appropriate emergency accommodation when they need it.	Victim survivors will be supported to remain safely in their homes and connected to their community.	VICTIM SURVIVORS, VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, ARE SAFE AND SUPPORTED TO RECOVER AND THRIVE
All women and children who experience family violence will be able to access effective specialist family violence services when they need them.	More women and children at risk of family violence will be able to access effective early interventions.	
The overall number of Child Protection reports and re-reports will be stabilised.	The overall number of Child Protection re-reports that lead to a substantiation will be significantly reduced.	
All family violence intervention order breaches will be acted on.	Family violence recidivism will be eliminated.	PERPETRATORS ARE HELD TO ACCOUNT, ENGAGED AND CONNECTED
More people at risk of using family violence will be able to access effective early interventions.		
Workers will feel supported and experience less stress and vicarious trauma.	Workers in universal services will feel confident to identify and respond to all forms of family violence.	PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE IS SYSTEMIC AND ENDURING

I need my voice to be heard.
I'm sick of being silenced
– Victim survivor

4 ENDING THE SILENCE

VICTIM SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN SILENCED FOR TOO LONG.

To make a difference to the lives of victim survivors, we must listen and understand what it is like to experience family violence and navigate Victoria's current family violence system.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence told us what an improved system should look like. The Victorian Government is now listening to victim survivors who tell us what they hope that the future system will feel like.

Through our work with victim survivors, we heard from people from all walks of life. It takes courage to share stories and experiences of family violence. Victim survivors told us: 'Sharing stories helps build solidarity and to build an understanding that my situation is not unique, that I am not alone'.

We heard that victim survivors had experienced a wide range of controlling and coercive behaviours, including sexual, physical, emotional and financial abuse which often extended over a significant period of their lives.

Their voices have been silenced by the perpetrators of violence and society for too long. They felt compelled to share their experiences so they could be part of the changes we need to make. We are grateful for their courage in sharing these experiences and stories with us.

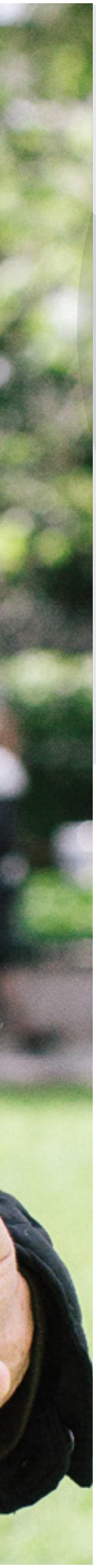
Throughout our reforms, we will continue to listen to victim survivors and work together to shape the necessary changes into the future.

My voice is ignored. My requests are ignored ... This has to change for children like me to be safe.

– Anonymous, Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

I've built up strategies to keep me and the kids safe.
I'm sick of feeling controlled by other people.
I need to prove the abuse before people believe me.
I don't want to leave. I just want the violence to stop.
Community awareness is not enough. It takes courage to do something about it.
Sometimes it feels like I'm managing this completely on my own.
I'm forced to play a role, but I just want to be myself.
It's frightening because I can't predict or comprehend what the next steps are.
I wonder if I'll ever escape this fear.
My dysfunctional private life is exposed and I'm being scrutinised by everybody.
The impact of this reverberates across every aspect of my life.
Others who've been through this help me feel less alone.

THE EXPERIENCE VICTIM SURVIVORS WANT TO HAVE IN THE FUTURE



5 TRANSFORMING HOW WE PREVENT AND RESPOND TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

WE HAVE SET AMBITIOUS TARGETS TO DRIVE SUSTAINED ACTION AND BUILD A FUTURE WHERE ALL VICTORIANS ARE SAFE, THRIVING AND LIVE FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE.

We will put victim survivors at the centre of everything we do, and ensure that they are safe and supported to recover.

Victim survivors have told us that the system feels like a tangled mess—like being blindfolded in a labyrinth. It was described as impossible to navigate, easy to get lost in, and having so many barriers and dead-ends that some found it too difficult to find help at all.

For too long the system and its processes have taken priority over the person. Services are fragmented. Victim survivors have to tell their story over and over again.

Children are often invisible to the system. It does not recognise them as victims or fails to provide the support they need.

What victim survivors hope for in the future is that the walls of the labyrinth come down and people are able to find a pathway to safety and a Victoria free from family violence.

We will bring down these walls and fill these gaps by realising the following four elements of our shared vision:

1. Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated.
2. Victim survivors, vulnerable children and families, are safe and supported to recover and thrive.
3. Perpetrators are held to account, engaged and connected.
4. Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.

To better support adult and child victims, all services and systems must work better together.

A strong, highly skilled and well-funded specialist family violence sector will be at the core of our vision and transformation, working closely with other child and family, justice, universal and specialist services. Other vital areas such as Victoria Police and the courts will need to work seamlessly with the family violence sector to support victim survivors and to hold perpetrators to account.

The development of the Support and Safety Hubs (see page 36) presents a once in a generation opportunity to build the best possible local responses. They will make sure that vulnerable people do not fall through the cracks and they instead receive consistent, quality services.

The creation of a dedicated Prevention Agency and Primary Prevention Strategy will position Victoria as a world leader in driving a long-term, sustained and evidence-based effort to transform the structures, norms and practices that drive family violence.

We are creating a world-leading response to family violence while simultaneously progressing significant reforms across the social services and justice systems. The family violence agenda is also being implemented by:

- improving the way vulnerable children, young people and families are supported through *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children*
- developing Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy
- our LGBTI agenda
- ongoing reform to our police and justice responses
- the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- changes in housing and homeless services; and
- our Aboriginal Self-Determination agenda.

CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE GET HELP AND SUPPORT

The victim bears the burden of navigating a fragmented and confusing system.

BROKEN SYSTEM

The system has been hard to navigate and does not meet individual needs. People seeking help feel overwhelmed and isolated.

All these reforms recognise that the way to drive real and effective change for women, children and families is to intervene earlier and build better connections between our universal, secondary and tertiary services.

We will focus on understanding how different forms of inequality and power imbalance can compound discrimination and amplify the risk of family violence.

We will embed a better response to people from diverse communities by making sure our prevention system and family violence services are designed for diversity. We have developed a new Diversity and Intersectionality Framework which will guide our work. We will also work together with the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum to strengthen reforms for Aboriginal Victorians.

By aligning our changes across all service systems, we can overcome our past mistakes where systems did not operate in a unified way. It is family violence victims and others in need who have incurred the cost of this.

Through the initiatives that will be delivered under this 10 Year Plan, our specialist family violence sector, justice responses, children and families sector, housing and homelessness sector, education system, health, mental health and legal services will work together like they have never done before.

Reducing the burden and breaking down the barriers to make it easier to navigate the family violence system.

CURRENT

By responding to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, we are simplifying the system for all Victorians.

Co-ordinated support and response from early intervention to crisis to recovery.

FUTURE

Our transformed system will be easy to navigate and empower people to receive the services they need when they need them.

DIVERSITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY FRAMEWORK

GOAL OF THE FRAMEWORK

The needs of all Victorians will be met by designing for diversity and intersectionality at the outset. This means creating and sustaining a family violence and social service system that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and accessible for everyone.

The mainstream service system will be better able to understand and respond to the complexity and the spectrum of family violence experienced in diverse communities. This will be complemented by targeted services specifically designed to meet the needs of diverse community groups. This will reduce the risk, occurrence and impact of family violence for diverse groups which include: Aboriginal communities; diverse cultural, linguistic and faith communities; people with a disability; people experiencing mental health issues; older people; LGBTI people; women in or exiting prison or forensic institutions; people who work in the sex industry; people living in regional, remote and rural communities; male victims; and young people.

INTERSECTIONAL RISK

The framework outlines how individuals from diverse backgrounds can hold overlapping or intersectional forms of diversity such as gender, ethnicity and cultural background, language, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, geographic location or visa status. Due to individual and structural power imbalances that exist within society, this intersectional diversity can result in a person experiencing overlapping forms of inequality, discrimination and stigma. This can compound power imbalance and exacerbate the risk or experience of family violence and amplify barriers to reporting, accessing and receiving appropriate services.

Eight principles have been developed to guide our reform approach and to underpin an inclusive and accessible service system for everyone:

ACCESSIBLE
Services are accessible, equitable and responsive to intersectional need.

RIGHTS & RESPECT
Services are underpinned by human rights, empathy and Aboriginal self-determination.

INCLUSIVE & NON-DISCRIMINATORY
Attitudes, behaviours, policies and systems enable full and equal participation for everyone.

EMPOWERMENT
Individuals are active participants at all levels of planning and decision-making. Workforce and governance structures reflect community diversity.

RESPONSIVE
Programs, services and funding are flexible, responsive to diversity and offer strengths-based and family-inclusive models.

PARTNERSHIPS
Community and cross-sector partnerships enhance service integration, accessibility and responsiveness.

PREVENTION
Tailored to respond to intersectional experiences of family violence and inequality.

EVALUATION
Services are accountable, reflective and use evaluation to measure and improve responsiveness to diversity.

How it was developed

Our new Diversity and Intersectionality Framework has been co-designed with sector and community representatives across all diverse community groups.

SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

Our family violence reforms will build on the government's commitment to embedding the right to Aboriginal self-determination, already evidenced by:

- Government discharging itself as first mortgagee over Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations' assets.
- Investing in and enabling Aboriginal-led organisations to care for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care to ensure they remain culturally connected.
- Transferring ownership of significant social housing stock to Aboriginal Housing Victoria.

We will build on the foundations of the *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples and Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*.

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting an enduring community-led response underpinned by a strong Aboriginal community-controlled sector and community partnerships.

We acknowledge that due recognition and respect will be given to the unique knowledge, skills and expertise which Aboriginal people bring to the reform of the service system. In particular, the work of the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, the Aboriginal Justice Forum and the Aboriginal Children's Forum.

The strong commitment from the Aboriginal community sector to the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum has provided robust advice to the government on how to address family violence, and the development of innovative, culturally responsive wrap-around services which meet family and community need.

Through a sustained and committed approach, the Aboriginal community have delivered many community-led initiatives which have had a substantial impact across the state. These initiatives include:

- Specialist, culturally informed healing and time out centres.
- Services that specifically work with Aboriginal male perpetrators to address the underlying factors that contribute to violence.
- Targeted and localised advertising campaigns.
- Programs targeted at encouraging respectful relationships with Aboriginal youth.
- Providing better connections between specialist family violence and legal services and Aboriginal victim survivors.
- Building the capacity of local police to appropriately respond to family violence against Aboriginal women and children through the Koori Family Violence Police Protocols.

The established engagement forums will be integral to the co-design of the Rolling Action Plans. Investment in family violence through these reforms will focus on addressing the disproportionate impacts on Aboriginal families.

Over the next two years, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and the government will work together to strengthen family violence reforms in an Aboriginal context. This will include:

- The development of a complementary Aboriginal 10 Year Plan.
- Full implementation of the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of the *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan*. Specifically, we will re-commit to the community-led approach; support Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups to influence place-based initiatives; and improve data collection, quality and sharing.
- Strengthening the operations of the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum.
- Developing new holistic healing models that address the effects of family violence in Aboriginal families.
- Encouraging innovation through the Community Initiatives Fund grants.

A more responsive service system for Aboriginal communities will be achieved through alignment with other Aboriginal strategies including the:

- Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan.
- Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework (currently under development).
- *Always was, always will be Koori children: Systemic inquiry into the services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria.*
- *In the child's best interests: Inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Child Placement Principle in Victoria.*
- Aboriginal Children's Strategy (currently under development).
- *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children.*
- *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026.*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement.*

This will include continuing to build on the work and lessons from previous landmark reports in partnership with Aboriginal Victoria

- *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families.*
- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

No one should tolerate this. I believe this is a community issue and we should focus on education and prevention.
– Victim survivor

6 FAMILY VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY ARE NOT TOLERATED

WE WILL:

- Deliver Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy.
- Develop a Primary Prevention Strategy.
- Establish a Prevention Agency supported by enduring family violence prevention funding.
- Launch a whole-of-community Family Violence Awareness Campaign to commence in 2017 that will begin our journey to a genuine primary prevention campaign for all Victorians.
- Rollout Respectful Relationships to schools and early learning environments.

Family violence is preventable. However, for too long we have focused on a crisis response at the expense of a long-term approach to prevention.

Changing this will require a sustained focus and commitment over many years. It may take a generation to change the structures, norms, attitudes and behaviours that cause family violence.

A Victoria free from family violence cannot be achieved without challenging the economic, political and social structures and systems that support the attitudes and behaviours that drive family violence.

Only through sustained and enduring efforts that challenge these drivers, can prevention become a reality for all Victorians.

GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

National and international research shows that gender inequality is the key driver of violence against women. Specifically, it shows that there are certain expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict higher rates of violence. These include condoning violence against women; men's control of decision-making and limiting women's independence; rigid constructions of what it means to be women and men; and peer relations between men that emphasise aggression and disrespect to women.

To prevent family violence and other forms of violence against women we must challenge the negative attitudes that create and maintain gender inequality and discrimination. We must work to build equality between women and men, girls and boys, while acknowledging trans and gender diversity.

PREVENTION AGENCY

A Prevention Agency will provide a strengthened focus on prevention of family violence. The Prevention Agency will:

- coordinate and oversee activities under the Primary Prevention Strategy
- monitor and provide advice on the achievement of prevention outcomes
- commission research into prevention methods and activities
- fund, coordinate and support Local Prevention Alliances, and
- work with Australia's national primary prevention organisation, *Our Watch*, and other organisations working in the field of prevention to change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence in Victoria.

Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy will be released in December 2016, during the Victoria Against Violence campaign. It will address the social norms and structures of gender inequality across our society, including in workplaces, schools, sporting clubs, early childhood and care services, the media and in online and physical public spaces.

The strategy creates the framework for sustained action on gender inequality and includes:

- Founding reforms actions to support structural and systemic change, including the Victorian Government leading gender equality in its employment practices; using an understanding of gender to inform policy-making and budget decisions; and leveraging our role as a purchaser, funder and partner to encourage business, community organisations and the Commonwealth Government to follow our lead.
- Strategic alliances with industry, philanthropists, local councils, the not-for-profit sector, women's health organisations, sporting bodies, education providers and others who want to be a part of driving this change. This recognises that gender equality relies on the whole community working together.
- An outcomes framework, including targets, actions and indicators against which we will measure progress.

PRIMARY PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Primary Prevention Strategy will be released in 2017. It will outline how we will engage with the Victorian community to change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence and will reinforce the message that family violence is not acceptable or excusable in any circumstance.

The Strategy will take a whole-of-community approach to raise awareness and drive change across a wide range of settings. The strategy will work with Victorians at every stage of life: supporting new parents to adjust to their new roles; working with children and young people from early childhood to create a culture of gender equality and respectful relationships; and encouraging all members of the community to treat older family members with dignity and respect. The strategy will also look to build on the evidence of what works and to better understand how to prevent family violence.

WORKPLACE EQUALITY AND RESPECT PROJECT

The Victorian Workplace Equality and Respect Project will deliver programs regarding the prevention of violence against women, gender equality and respect in workplace settings across Victoria.

It is anticipated that the project will directly reach in excess of 2,000 employees across multiple sectors, workplaces and geographical locations in Victoria, including industry groups, unions, peak bodies, employees' families and communities.

The Victorian Government has also funded *Our Watch* to develop a framework model, practice standards, and transferable tools and resources for workplaces to use in their efforts to achieve more equal and violence free workplaces. The standards and tools will be available more widely in 2017.

CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOURS

Following the release of this Plan, the Victoria against Violence campaign and the United Nation's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we will launch the first stage of a behaviour change campaign.

Behaviour change campaigns have played an important role in communicating more broadly, the clear standards for expected behaviour, which plays an important role in supporting other more targeted programs designed to change attitudes and behaviours over time. For example, Victoria pioneered the Slip, Slop, Slap campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of UV exposure and to inform the community about how to change their behaviours to be Sun Smart.

A number of campaigns have been run in Australia in the past ten years to raise awareness of family violence in our communities, such as the Australia Says No campaign, The Line campaign and the recent Stop it at the start campaign. The Victorian Government will build on the public awareness and understanding of family violence created by these campaigns, and provide information to the Victorian community about the work underway to reform how we respond to family violence. This campaign will provide an important foundation for future behaviour change campaigns informed by the Primary Prevention Strategy. Importantly, this campaign will build understanding of and awareness of gender inequality as a key driver of family violence.

Future behaviour change campaigns, as recommended by the Royal Commission will be informed by the Primary Prevention Strategy, which will be released in March 2017.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING ABOUT RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

This generation of Victorian children and young people, and generations to come, can expect to learn about how to build and participate in safe and respectful relationships in their families, with their friends and in their communities.

The new Victorian Curriculum, beginning in 2017, strengthens the critical role of Respectful Relationships education in schools. This will be supported by a newly released suite of teaching and learning resources developed by the University of Melbourne, *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships*. These resources support age appropriate learning activities for students from Prep to Year 12, and cover eight key social and emotional learning topics including help-seeking, decision-making, and positive gender relationships.

A successful trial of a whole-of-school approach to Respectful Relationships in 19 Victorian schools demonstrated that embedding Respectful Relationships education in a school's culture leads to clear improvements in student and staff knowledge, attitudes and confidence in discussing issues of violence, equality and respectful relationships.

This trial concluded that cultural change is a long and sustained process, requiring support for a longer period. The government's implementation of a whole-of-school approach in all Victorian schools reflects this, and will embed Respectful Relationships in the policies and practices as well as the teaching and learning in schools.

We will train up to 4,000 early childhood educators in respectful relationships education so that positive role modelling begins early and has the best chance of making a lasting impact.

> ***'I think it's a good idea to have this sort of program in more schools. It'll stop the system; boys growing up thinking that they should be the more dominant person in the relationship and learning this now might stop that and make it less of a problem'.***
>
> *– Student*

CASE STUDY
LUCY'S EXPERIENCE

FUTURE

Lucy plays football at a local club. The girls' team has equal access to the club's coaches and facilities. Women are involved at all levels of the club leadership and administration. The club understands its responsibility to promote gender equality.

FUTURE

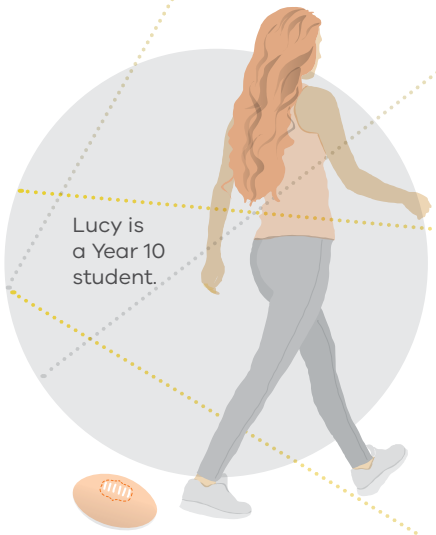
Women and men are both visibly represented at all levels of football, in the media and in the community. There are clear pathways for young women to move from playing for local clubs into professional teams, with the same pay and conditions as men's teams. Women and men are employed as officials and have high-profile roles as media commentators. These high-profile women and men speak out against disrespect and gender inequality.

CURRENT

Lucy loves football and wants to play, but her school doesn't have a girls' team. When Lucy asks her sports teacher if she could set one up, he tells her to play netball instead.

CURRENT

Lucy loves watching football and would love to consider a career in it, but she doesn't see many high profile women in her sport, on or off the ground. The few women she does see discussing football in the media are not taken seriously, treated as purely decorative or are the subject of sexist and violent 'jokes'. In Lucy's mind, she will only ever be able to be a spectator.



CURRENT

Lucy's ex-boyfriend sends his friends some intimate photos of her. When the photos spread around the school, people blame Lucy for taking the photos in the first place. Lucy doesn't report her ex-boyfriend to the school or the police because she's ashamed, and holds herself responsible.

FUTURE

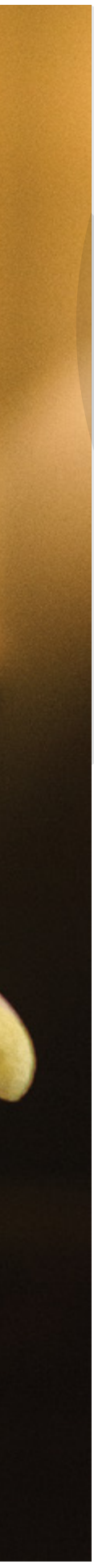
Male and female students understand that sharing personal images without consent is a form of intimate partner violence. Male and female students understand that the blame rests only with the perpetrator. When incidents of violence like this occur, nobody questions the victim's behaviour or experiences. The whole school community makes it clear that the perpetrator's behaviour is not acceptable.

CURRENT

The boys at school make suggestive comments about her and no one tells them to stop. Lucy chooses her clothes carefully because she knows the boys at school will make assumptions about her on the basis of what she's wearing. Lucy often chooses not to wear things she really likes because she feels responsible for protecting herself from her male peers.

FUTURE

Lucy and her peers at school have all learnt about respect, consent and equality. Male students are quick to pull each other up when they hear sexist jokes or discrimination. Teachers have had professional development on respectful relationships and know how to address sexism in the classroom. Parents have a clear understanding of the school's core values and approach. Lucy feels part of an inclusive and equal school community.



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

WE WILL:

- Embed early intervention in all aspects of our family violence, social services and justice systems.
- Build the capacity and capability of specialist family violence services.
- Develop a network of Support and Safety Hubs and specialist service navigators.
- Design our system and services to keep children safe.
- Take a whole of family approach to stopping violence, keeping victim survivors safe from harm, and helping them to recover from the experience of violence.
- Provide safe and stable housing.
- Support longer-term recovery with employment, financial security, legal assistance, educational opportunities and supports for emotional and mental health needs.
- Build a more responsive and victim-focused justice system, including through reforms to Victoria Police and the courts.

For some families, violence is a real and imminent possibility, while for others, violence is a daily reality. The current service system does not make it easy for victim survivors and families to know what support is available or how they can get help. When people do seek help, they are met with a system that is almost impossible to navigate.

The places they seek help are often not able to adequately understand their risks and needs or how best to support them. They might need help from a range of services—and have to re-tell their story to each service.

We will keep victim survivors, their children and families safe and support them to recover and thrive.

EARLIER, MORE EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

Recognising and responding to early warning signs can prevent family violence from occurring or stop it escalating to a crisis situation. Intervening early means identifying people who are at heightened risk, may already be experiencing or using family violence and connecting them with the right support the first time they seek it.

Everyone's circumstances are different. We need to provide a range of effective early interventions that match support to the level of individual need and build on people's strengths to overcome challenges, reconnect with family and community and lead safe, independent and fulfilling lives.

This means enhancing our state and local government early intervention platforms including Maternal and Child Health services, parenting programs, early childhood education and care, schools and community health services. We can also connect with people at risk through services targeted at people with more specific needs such as family support, legal, housing, financial support, mental health and drug and alcohol services.

Early engagement will mean a change to how our workforces—doctors and nurses, educators, and family services—see their role and responsibilities in identifying risk and facilitating early intervention.

Getting the right support early—before a situation reaches crisis—can minimise disruption, trauma, physical and psychological injury and break intergenerational cycles of family violence. It also reduces the financial costs of family violence for individuals, government and the community.

To facilitate early interventions and more effective responses, we will:

- Train and equip staff in all parts of the social service and justice system to recognise and respond to the early warning signs of family violence. This will include facilitating partnerships between the family violence sector and early childhood settings and schools to provide referral pathways for staff and students affected by family violence.

- Use the opportunity created by integrating ChildFIRST into the Support and Safety Hubs to strengthen partnerships and collaboration between family services, specialist family violence services and other services to make sure that families receive the support they need to prevent the escalation of violence.
- Build the capacity of key services and programs, including Maternal and Child Health services, to provide tailored support for victim survivors, vulnerable children and families.
- Resource all public hospitals across the state to implement a whole-of-hospital approach to strengthen their responses to family violence.

Implementation of these reforms will build on work already underway, including the *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children*. The *Roadmap for Reform* includes once in a generation changes to ensure all Victorian families are as safe as possible and vulnerable children are fully supported. The reform focuses on creating services that are coordinated and work together to meet the needs of vulnerable families and children.

I need you to hear me and believe my story. I feel validated.

– Victim survivor

WHOLE-OF-HOSPITAL APPROACH

To deliver a whole-of-hospital response to family violence, health services are being resourced to improve their responses to family violence and to refer patients experiencing family violence to the appropriate support services. Drawing on international best practice, this whole-of-hospital response aligns with the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence initiative, led by the Royal Women's Hospital and Bendigo Health, as well as aligning with the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework.

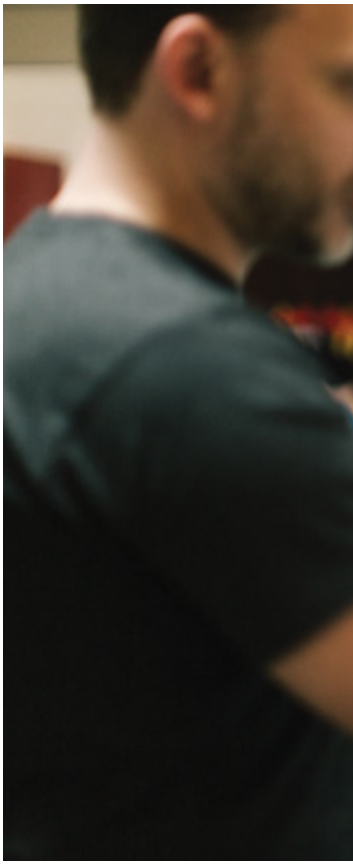
Fifteen health services have been funded to deliver the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence initiative since 2015. Specialist family violence practitioners provide expert and targeted training to hospital staff, including executives, frontline clinicians and non-clinical staff. Approximately 500 staff have been trained in 2015–16 to identify and respond to family violence through this initiative. Three regional services have been funded to coordinate and support other health services within their region to implement a whole-of-hospital model for responding to family violence. Health services will continue implementing family violence workforce training, aiming to increase the number of trained staff to over 1,000 within the next three years.

Health services are working to broaden the focus of this initiative beyond intimate partner abuse, to progressively incorporate guidance about responding to cases of elder abuse, sexual assault and children experiencing family violence.

SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

... I cannot stress enough the pivotal role that [my] support worker played. The continuity and dependability of care I received from her and the calming effect of having a qualified and skilled worker with real knowledge of this area made an immense difference to my recovery.

– Royal Commission into Family Violence: Report and recommendations



At a time of crisis, a specialist response that understands the impacts of family violence is crucial. Specialist family violence workers understand the dynamic and escalating levels of family violence risk and have deep expertise in planning for safety.

However, specialist family violence services are currently overwhelmed by demand limiting the response they can provide. There has also been a failure to value and invest in this sector and its dedicated workforce.

Many rural and regional communities are not well-serviced by specialist family violence services or there are particular pressures on services due to the increased reporting to police in these communities.

To improve specialist responses, we will:

- Build the capacity and capability of specialist family violence services to respond to all forms of family violence and intersectional need.
- Effectively resource specialist family violence service responses so they are of a high-quality, accessible, consistent and equitable across the state (including after-hours).
- Include advanced practitioners in the Support and Safety Hubs to build on the expertise of the specialist sector and offer strong career pathways for case workers.
- Build a family violence workforce for the future, through attracting and retaining a diverse workforce with ongoing training and development.
- Create consistent and standardised practice across all specialist services, so that adult and child victims receive a consistent standard of care.
- Draw on the expertise of the specialist family violence sector in building the capacity of community health services, clinical and family-based mental health services, hospitals, schools and legal services to identify and respond to family violence.
- Build strong linkages between multi-disciplinary centres for sexual assault and Support and Safety Hubs so that victim survivors of sexual assault and family violence receive the services they need.

SPECIALIST PRACTITIONERS

Specialist family violence adviser positions will be created in the major mental health and drug and alcohol services across Victoria so that family violence expertise is available to staff. As a result, mental health and drug and alcohol practitioners will be better equipped to identify and respond to family violence with clear referral pathways to specialist services. It will also mean that people experiencing family violence who are using these services will get better support earlier.

Principal practitioner positions within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice and Regulation will also be created to provide practice leadership, promote evidence-based policy and advocate for further workforce professional development. These roles will provide support to departmental practitioners and programs that intersect with family violence, ensuring that family violence practice, knowledge and leadership is strengthened across a range of workforces.

MAKING IT EASIER TO NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM

Many victim survivors want help with navigating our often confusing systems. They have told us that they want a person to guide them through the system, advocate for them and empower them to choose the supports they need.

We know there are highly skilled case managers supporting women to do this. We also know that there are not enough of these workers and they are frustrated by funding and program constraints that get in the way of providing the support women and children need.

Service navigators will be highly skilled specialist workers to support women, children, young people and perpetrators. The role will have the flexibility and capacity needed to support women and children from crisis through to recovery, working in strong collaboration across community and justice services. Workers providing navigation will need to be closely linked to intake, assessment and planning as well as supporting ongoing risk assessment, safety planning and achievement of outcomes.

We are working closely with our Industry Taskforce so that all people across Victoria, including people from diverse communities, will have access to navigation support.

SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS

I would like to see in place, one organisation where you can just make one phone call to get the help you need either to start up again like I have had to from scratch, but more importantly someone to support your physical and your mental wellbeing to make that transition and to make it not difficult for you. To make sure you are their priority and nothing else matters except your safety.

– Anonymous, Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

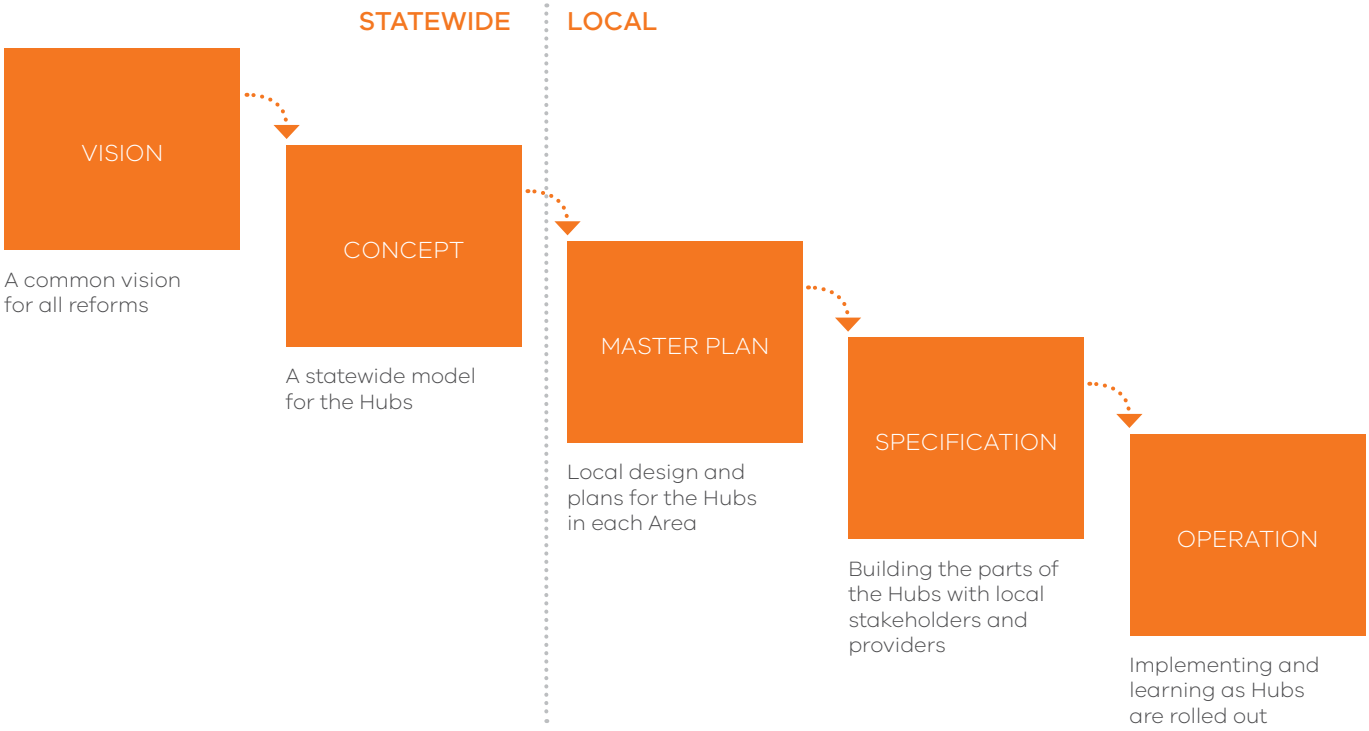
A network of Support and Safety Hubs will provide women and children experiencing family violence, and other families in need of support, with quick and simple access to the support and safety they need. The Hubs were one of the foundational reforms recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The Support and Safety Hubs will provide clear referral points for police and other services, as well as visible contact points for victim survivors, family, friends and the community. They will provide people with early and easy access to highly skilled professionals who will work with them to understand their risks and needs, and plan the best service response. Bringing together expertise in family violence, family services and perpetrator interventions will create a multi-disciplinary approach to providing safety and support. The Hubs will also support stronger collaboration, combining different expertise, perspectives and specialisations.

The Hubs will be integrated with the broader social service and justice systems to put the needs of individuals and families at the centre. We know that women and children will continue to enter the system from many different entry points. The principle of 'no wrong door' for victim survivors of family violence will be maintained. The success of the Hubs will depend on a fully functioning network of services working with women, children and families over the longer term, including family violence and community services, and all parts of the social services and justice system.

We have developed an approach to the design and delivery of the Hubs which includes creating a statewide concept to define the intent, scope and policy framework. This will inform the local design of Hubs which will be undertaken in partnership with communities and determine where and how the Hubs will operate for each local area across Victoria.

DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS



COORDINATION AGENCY

A Coordination Agency will support more effective responses that keep women and children safe and supported and keep perpetrators in view. It will achieve this by coordinating and managing family violence and relevant services across government.

The Agency will establish and oversee the operation of the Support and Safety Hubs and support coordination across the Hubs, government agencies and funded service providers to respond more effectively to those affected by family violence. It will also support a statewide information sharing platform across multiple agencies to ensure that the right information is available at the right time.

HUB DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following key principles will underpin the Hubs' design.

1. Put people at the centre

From the very first contact, the Hubs will support women, children and families to decide what they need to be safe and to recover. The Hubs will work at the pace of the victim survivor to ensure choice and control.

2. Be safe and accessible to all

The Hubs will be welcoming and safe places, free of stigma or judgement, and designed for the diversity of people and communities that access their services. Local communities will help to inform how the Hubs are accessible and welcoming, including how we can make sure that every Hub is culturally safe for Aboriginal and diverse communities.

3. Address the needs of children and families

The Hubs will take a whole-of-family approach. While Hubs will give individual and specific attention to all victim survivors, and perpetrators, they may deliver services to these groups in different ways (for example, to ensure safety). Integrating Child FIRST within the Hubs will enable the needs of children to be further reflected in planning and decision-making. Families will be supported and referred to the right part of the service system. This will make sure that children and families receive the tailored support they need.

4. A paramount focus on safety

The safety of victim survivors and children will be the Hubs' first priority so that the onus is no longer on victim survivors to keep themselves and their children safe. A person-centred approach to safety planning will take into account the needs, preferences, cultural and community context for victim survivors. The Hubs will be able to prioritise safety through a new information sharing regime, the redevelopment of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework and access to the Central Information Point and Risk Management and Assessment Panels. This will mean that the Hubs will have complete information about the perpetrator, enabling them to better assess and manage risk.

5. Working closely with the justice system

The Hubs will work closely with police, courts and other justice agencies to hold perpetrators to account and keep women and children safe. Hubs and justice agencies will share information to keep the perpetrator in view, coordinate efforts and make every response count—especially when risk escalates. Victim survivors will be able to connect with the Hubs at court, and vice versa, to get the support they need to be safe.

6. Diversity

The Hubs will meet the needs of the diverse people and communities who need access to their services, respond effectively to violence in all its forms, and offer culturally safe responses.

7. Focus on early intervention

The Hubs will work to engage women and families early, be well connected to universal services and the community, and will work to prevent family violence at every opportunity. The Hubs will also intervene early for children and families displaying other signs of vulnerability (such as parenting issues) which often co-occur with family violence.

8. Harnessing multi-disciplinary, specialist support

The Hubs will bring together experts who can work with the whole family and create clear pathways for the full support they need. The Hubs will then work with the health, justice and community service systems to coordinate support around individuals and families, keeping people safe and supporting them to recover and thrive.

9. Statewide coverage and consistent quality and access to services

No matter where people live, they will have access to the Hubs—via a physical Hub, online and telephone access, or an outreach worker. The network of Hub services will be underpinned by an information sharing platform and a consistent statewide approach to service delivery.

10. Work in partnership with local communities

The Hubs will be developed in conjunction with local communities. Local leadership will be vital to the success of the Hubs and will inform the understanding of community need and the kind of services that work best to address that need. This will build on local resources, networks and current infrastructure.

11. Whole-of-system response

The Hubs will recognise and support all parts of the service system to play their role in an integrated system that works to keep people safe and well. Hubs will complement other reforms underpinning an effective whole-of-system response, including building workforce capacity and capability, a new system to prevent family violence, a new approach to funding services and more effective perpetrator interventions.

THE ELEMENTS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS

Central Information Point—ready access to the right information

HUB ACCESS NETWORK

Many ways for people to access the help they need.

COMMUNITY-BASED HUBS

Safe, non-stigmatising and accessible community locations closely connected to support services:

- Early intervention/ family services
- MCH
- Community Health

'SPOKES'

Satellite access points to meet the needs of rural or diverse communities

OUT-POSTED WORKERS

Workers embedded in health, education, community and legal services

OUTREACH/MOBILE

Hub team members can meet people where they feel safe and comfortable

PHONE

ONLINE

PROFESSIONAL AND OTHER REFERRALS

- Police, courts and legal services
- Schools and early childhood services
- Hospital, GPs and health services
- Other services or community members

HUB TEAM

Family Violence | Children / Families | Perpetrator

KEY FUNCTION—WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT, SAFETY AND RECOVERY

Initial contact

Screening and multi-disciplinary triage

Specialist risk assessment and safety planning (including access to RAMPS)

Immediate crisis response

Multi-disciplinary needs assessment and planning

Navigation through the system

KEY FUNCTION—EASY, SIMPLE AND TIMELY ACCESS TO THE RIGHT SERVICES

Accessing services to meet people's needs and preferences

Making sure that services are effective and outcomes are being achieved

KEY FUNCTION—NAVIGATING PEOPLE THROUGH THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES

Helping the person to navigate the whole system

A consistent point of contact across early intervention, crisis and recovery

BROADER SERVICE SYSTEM

Family Violence | Aboriginal services | Mental Health | Housing

Corrections | Early Childhood & MCH

Courts | Schools

Child Protection | Police

Alcohol/drug treatment | Health services

Financial Counselling | Legal Services | Family Services

Some communities will want some of these services available in their Hubs

SUPPORTED BY A SYSTEM THAT PUTS PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE

- Local area service and system planning
- Strong local networks/partnerships
- Coordinated governance structures
- Community awareness raising and capacity building

CASE STUDY
MARLA'S EXPERIENCE IN THE FUTURE

SAFE

Marla phones 000. The police arrive at her home. Based on their risk assessment of Marla's safety (all police are trained in family violence risk assessment), as well as up-to-date information accessed via their mobile device—including the last report and the most recent Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO)—they assess that Marla is at serious risk. The police arrest Marla's husband for breaching the FVIO and support Marla to contact the local Support and Safety Hub through a L17 (Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report) formal referral. Over the coming months, the local police Family Violence Team continue to play a key role by participating in Marla's ongoing safety and planning. This planning is coordinated by the Hub in conjunction with her family violence service and other supports. This work includes ongoing police contact, engagement with her husband and his compliance with the FVIO and other interventions that have been put in place.

SAFE TO REMAIN AT HOME

As part of Marla's safety assessment and planning, the Hub finds Marla emergency housing. However, ultimately Marla's choice is to stay safe at home. The Hub ensures that Marla's home is made safe and that her ongoing safety is monitored with the police being active partners in keeping the family safe. Through the Hub, key changes are made to the home to deter her husband from re-entering the home. These measures are flexibly introduced in line with Marla's choices.

LEGAL SUPPORTS

Within the safe environment of the Hub, and based on an initial assessment of her legal needs by the Hub team, Marla is immediately connected with legal information and advice. With Marla's consent, the Hubs tell the lawyer about her situation so she does not have to repeat her story. Marla talks to the lawyer about her options for an FVIO. She feels more prepared to go to court now she knows what will happen on the day. Marla also talks to the lawyer about her concerns about the custody of her children and the lease on her flat, and makes a time to get some more detailed advice on her options. The Hub helps Marla to make arrangements for the care of her children on the day she goes to court. Marla is given a time to come to court and doesn't have to wait around all day. At court, Marla is able to wait in a separate, safe room. As a family violence matter, the case is heard in a specialist family violence court. The Magistrate understands the unique safety risks presented by Marla's husband to Marla and her children. The Magistrate also understands the relationship with the other areas of law that are not being dealt with that day, including child protection and family law. The Magistrate identifies a range of interventions to hold Marla's husband accountable for his actions. The Magistrate explains to Marla and her husband what has been decided and what the orders mean. A case manager works with Marla's husband to support and monitor his participation in the programs ordered by the Magistrate, who has access to up-to-date information about risk at all key decision points..

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

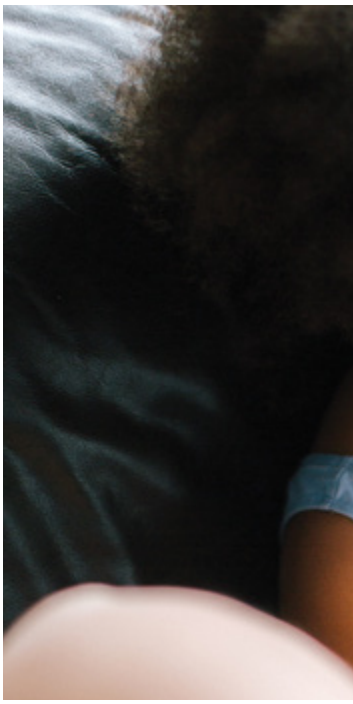
Through the Hub, family violence and family services experts will work together through collaborative practice and share information to be able to holistically assess the safety and recovery of Marla and her children. The Hub will ensure that as part of Marla's plan both of her children have access to trauma counselling. This counselling will not be limited by a number of visits but by when the outcomes are achieved for Marla's children. Marla's navigator will connect with her children's school, and together will develop a learning and wellbeing plan that helps Marla's children catch up and feel supported. This plan also helps Marla feel that she is welcome, safe and supported within the school community.

PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY

In assessing and planning for Marla's safety and ongoing recovery, the Hub identifies that Marla's husband has issues with alcohol and drugs. The Hub is able to ensure that services are coordinated to provide support to Marla's husband. The Magistrate also makes a FVIO for a period of two years, which prevents him from coming to Marla's home. Marla's husband receives case management which books him into drug and alcohol and mental health services, as well as his ongoing Men's Behavioural Change Course—with lack of engagement being a trigger to update Marla's safety plan. When the FVIO is approaching expiration, the Hub is notified through the Central Information Point. The Hubs team are able to inform Marla, re-assess Marla's safety plan and assist her to reconnect with her lawyer to seek an extension of the FVIO. Information about Marla's husband's progress through behaviour change and other programs is provided to the Magistrate, including updated risk assessments.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

The Hub supports Marla with a support package to alleviate financial stress. The Hub also connects Marla to a lawyer who helps her with an application to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal. The Hub links Marla to financial counselling that has specialist family violence expertise to help remove herself from joint accounts and set up her own bank accounts, deal with the fines incurred by her husband and set a budget. Marla is able to access family violence leave through her terms and conditions with her employer.



DESIGNING OUR SYSTEMS AND SERVICES TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

There needs to be ongoing support for children and young people who have experienced domestic violence or any other sort of disadvantage throughout their life. For them to be able to become successful so they can get over the experiences that they have had.

– Victim survivor

Children and young people are deeply affected by family violence regardless of what form it takes. To stop the life-long and intergenerational impacts of family violence, we need to focus on prevention. Until this time, we need to ensure that children's experience of family violence is identified in its own right, children are seen and heard, and their needs are met. Children and young people should be safe, secure and protected from violence within their home.

We know that most mothers go to extraordinary lengths to keep their children safe from violence. Research shows that some perpetrators systematically undermine the mother-child relationship as an abuse tactic—for example, by undermining the mother's parenting skills through criticism or putting her down in front of the children.

The changes we are making to improve our response to family violence will keep them safe by better equipping the professionals to respond to family violence and child abuse.

Some families experiencing family violence will also be engaged with the statutory Child Protection and out-of-home care systems. We are also embarking on significant changes to the child and family services system, underpinned by the *Roadmap to Reform*, that will fundamentally shift the way we work with vulnerable families to focus on prevention and early intervention. While improving our ability to identify risk, intervene early and support families will reduce the need for statutory interventions, we recognise that a strong Child Protection and out-of-home care system will continue to be required.

We will integrate ChildFIRST in the Hubs to better address the specific needs of children. Our design work will build on the strengths of the current system and maintain our focus on supporting vulnerable children and families. This includes the critical importance of appropriately resourcing early intervention and specialist services.

To keep children and young people safe, we will:

- Improve child and family services to build the capacity of vulnerable parents to protect and care for their children and foster a better understanding of the dynamics of family violence within the Child Protection workforce.
- Remove barriers to information sharing and provide clearer authority for front-line professionals in both government and non-government agencies to share information with one another.
- Equip Maternal and Child Health services, early childhood and education services, and schools with the skills and resources to better identify risk and support children and families through their recovery.

- Work with families earlier to reduce the escalation of risk and help families to establish the conditions of a safe and healthy childhood. This will involve the development of wrap-around service models that break down program boundaries to facilitate a whole-of-family approach and support families in a way that is most appropriate for them.
- Listen to children and young people throughout every stage, from service design to delivery.
- Support victims of family violence who are at risk of disengaging from education and training to stay engaged in learning.
- Bring a trauma lens to our practice including through ensuring that all affected children have access to therapeutic counselling.
- Better resource Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver culturally-safe services to Aboriginal children and families.
- Advocate for the Commonwealth Government to make changes to improve the family law system.

Recognise that I'm not the only victim, and my kids are impacted too.

– Victim survivor

Significant work is underway to progress changes in the Child Protection system. Support and Safety Hubs and other systemic reforms will seek to minimise the pressures on Child Protection, and ensure that children and families are referred to the services they need at the right time.

To further strengthen the Child Protection system we will:

- Continue to invest in our Child Protection workforce, including employing more workers, improving training, and implementing new workforce structures. Child Protection workers will be better equipped to engage with other parts of the service system, including engaging in multi-disciplinary risk assessment.
- Reduce the number of unallocated Child Protection cases to make sure that families presenting with significant risk factors are appropriately supported.
- Better support families once they are involved in the statutory system. Families will have increased access to family services throughout their engagement with Child Protection and out-of-home care to reduce re-reports, de-escalate risk and improve placement prevention and family reunification rates. We will also work to keep siblings together, where this is in their best interests.
- Support other parts of the system, including the Children's Court, to meet increasing demand arising from investment in the Child Protection system.
- Reframe residential care as a therapeutic treatment service to support more young people to return to their families or to safe, stable home-based care placements.
- Implement new safeguarding frameworks to protect children and young people in Victoria who are vulnerable to abuse, neglect and harm, including while in out-of-home care.

CASE STUDY
SAM'S EXPERIENCE

FUTURE

The school connects Sam to a Support and Safety Hub. The Hub team—which includes a community based Child Protection worker—visits Sam and his brother to undertake risk and safety planning that includes specialist expertise in child development and trauma informed practice. The Hub also undertakes risk assessment and safety planning for his mother (Amy). Amy is supported to address the risks to her and her children and to get the support they need, including to obtain a Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO).

CURRENT

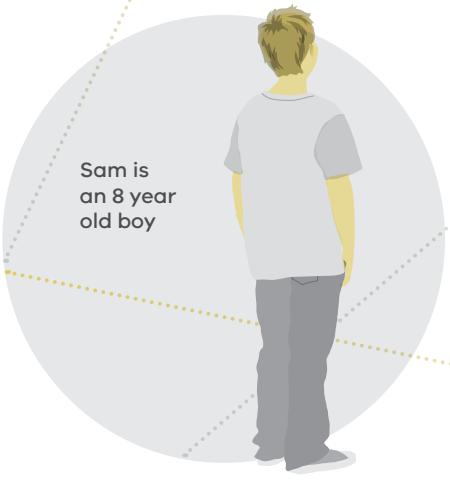
Sam experiences abuse from his mother Amy's new partner (Tim), and his younger brother occasionally witnesses it. They often skip school. When they do go to school, it is often without lunch and arrives late. Sam is withdrawn, disengaged and demonstrating signs of anxiety. Child Protection receive reports about Sam from his teachers. Child Protection investigate and find Tim is responsible for the harm to Sam. A safety plan is developed for his mum, Amy. Child Protection determine that the statutory threshold has not been met and refers Amy to a family support worker.

FUTURE

The Hub has relevant information about the whole family, including their history with services and efforts to manage risks. The Hub works with all services involved, including in consultation with Child Protection, to oversee the safety and support plan and revise it when risks change. With Amy's consent, they involve the police in enforcing the FVIO. They provide access to specialist support for her. Sam and his brother also have access to therapeutic counselling with a trauma lens and specialist support so they are secure in their home.

CURRENT

Over time, Child Protection receive a number of reports about Sam and/or his brother. Following escalating abuse experienced by both boys, child protection issue Protection Applications based on the assessment that Amy cannot protect them, though she has tried to maintain the safety plan. The Children's Court orders that Sam and his brother be placed into foster care.



CURRENT

Tim has moved out of Amy's home. Amy is linked to counselling. After some time, she is supported to resume care of her children.

FUTURE

As part of the FVIO, the Magistrate's Court orders Tim to attend a men's behaviour change program, where his attendance and any change in behaviour is monitored. The Hub supports Tim in locating accommodation, given the exclusion conditions on the FVIO. As part of the Hub's ongoing safety plan for Amy and her children, the risk posed by Tim is kept in view.

SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

A lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing options can result in victims of family violence having to choose between remaining in, or returning to, an abusive relationship or becoming homeless.

Our first priority will be to keep women and children in their homes wherever it is the women's choice and it is safe to do so, and remove the perpetrator. Where this is not possible or not the woman's preferred option, victim survivors will have immediate access to housing to support their safety and wellbeing.

To prevent women, children and young people from experiencing homelessness or having difficulties accessing housing as a result of family violence we will:

- Expand Safe At Home responses through an expansion of both family violence case management and Flexible Support Packages.
- Grow and diversify crisis accommodation so that women and children can access vacancies and are supported to make choices about the kind of housing that best meets their needs.
- Require crisis accommodation providers to improve their capacity to be safe, inclusive and responsive to meet the diverse needs of communities across Victoria.

- Provide culturally appropriate housing and support for Aboriginal women and children based on their needs and preferences, including the option to maintain a continued connection to family and community.
- Expand housing assistance options to support recovery and independent living by enabling women and children to access stable long-term housing quickly, rather than spending long periods in crisis or transitional accommodation.
- Increase the supply of social housing stock, both through the construction of new social housing properties and through innovative forms of housing assistance such as head-leasing in the private market and then sub-leasing to a tenant at a subsidised, affordable rate.
- Establish new supported accommodation options for young people who use family violence.
- Provide assistance to perpetrators where necessary to mitigate the risk of the perpetrator returning to a partner after becoming homeless.

Designing the new Support and Safety Hubs will involve engagement with the housing sector to ensure that the Hubs play a key role in linking women and children with safe and stable housing. This will include examining how the Hubs can provide prompt placement into emergency accommodation where required.

RENEWING AND GROWING SOCIAL HOUSING

We are increasing Victoria's supply of social housing for vulnerable Victorians, by investing over $300 million in redeveloping public housing estates across the state.

By working with the community housing sector and the private sector, we will grow and renew social housing on existing public housing estates and build on Director of Housing owned vacant land to increase social housing within private, mixed tenure developments.

Over 2,800 public housing properties will be redeveloped and more than 1,000 new social housing properties will be built to provide safe, affordable and secure housing for vulnerable Victorians.

I knew there was at least a roof over our heads and I had somewhere to feed my son.

– Victim survivor,
Royal Commission into Family Violence

FAMILY VIOLENCE FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PACKAGES

We are expanding the Family Violence Flexible Support Packages to provide longer-term rental and mortgage subsidies where required, along with assistance for the costs associated with securing and maintaining counselling, wellbeing, education, employment, financial counselling and other services designed to assist housing stability and financial security.

So far, we have committed $17 million in 2016–17 to provide a 480 per cent increase in Flexible Support Packages for victim survivors of family violence.

SUPPORTING RECOVERY

Employment, financial security, legal assistance and educational opportunities are central to the long-term recovery and wellbeing of victim survivors.

Women who have lived with a violent partner are more likely to experience financial insecurity and many experience poverty or have difficulty securing long-term, stable housing.

Trauma counselling may be necessary for victim survivors throughout their recovery.

Victim survivors of family violence, particularly newly arrived migrants or refugees, women with a disability and older people, may be financially dependent on the perpetrator or dependent on them for physical care, social inclusion or language requirements and visa stability.

Longer-term paid employment can help victim survivors become financially secure and recover from the effects of family violence. Being supported to continue in paid employment or find work, at a pace that is in their control, is critical to helping victim survivors build self-esteem and community connections as well as become financially independent.

Employment opportunities also assist with maintaining secure housing, providing certainty and stability.

To assist the recovery of victim survivors we will work at their pace and:

- Use the Jobs Victoria Employment Network to support vulnerable Victorians into the workforce and provide targeted support services for people looking for work and for employers looking for workers.
- Increase the use and availability of individualised funding packages to improve access to education and employment assistance for victim survivors of family violence.
- Support women to remain in employment by providing an entitlement to family violence leave. This will include working with the Commonwealth Government to recommend they amend the National Employment Standards in the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) to include an entitlement to paid family violence leave for employees and unpaid family violence leave for casual employees.

VICTIM-CENTRED JUSTICE

Victims have told us clearly that they are often re-traumatised by their engagement with our justice system. One woman told the Royal Commission that '[w]e went in there as complete amateurs, knew nothing about the system, knew nothing about anything and that's what its been like all the way through. We just clawed our way through the dark'.

– Royal Commission into Family Violence: Report and recommendations

Victoria has seen a number of family violence justice reforms over the last decade. However for many victim survivors, their experience with the justice system remains intimidating, alienating and confusing. Too frequently, the burden of navigating the justice system sits with victims and this experience is characterised by anxiety, humiliation and frustration. Most people do not get access to legal assistance when they most need it.

The safety of victims is paramount, and therefore must be at the forefront of justice responses to family violence.

Our reforms will deliver a justice system that is equipped to support, empower and protect women and children at risk. Change will occur across the entire justice system, from the legal framework that seeks to protect women and children and holds perpetrators accountable, through to the work of police and the courts, legal assistance services and corrections.

The Support and Safety Hubs will work closely with the justice system to improve outcomes for women and children and to hold perpetrators to account. This may include Hubs facilitating access to legal assistance; helping people navigate court and legal processes in the immediate aftermath of violence; and referring victims to the appropriate support to address ongoing legal issues, including family law, debt and tenancy. Our co-design process for the Hubs provides an opportunity to explore the best ways to connect court, legal, justice and Hub services so that people can access all the supports they need as seamlessly as possible, including through the use of technology.

Police—a critical first response

Police play an essential role in our frontline family violence response. They are often the first point of contact for victims and are crucial to holding perpetrators to account.

Victoria Police will be supported to provide the critical first response that adult and child victims need. To achieve this we will:

- Reform the role of Victoria Police so that family violence becomes a core part of their business and they are able to support victims.
- Create a new Victoria Police Family Violence Centre of Learning to support police and build their capabilities to respond to family violence.
- Increase the capacity of our police officers in the field with cutting edge technology. This will include mobile devices to ensure that police have better access to information in the field and exploring how best to use body-worn cameras to capture evidence in family violence investigations. New technology will also help police to immediately transmit L17 Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Reports to the Hubs.

NEW TOOLS FOR BETTER POLICE REFERRALS

New technology is modernising the distribution of Victoria Police reports from the family violence incidents they attend. The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report—known as the 'L17'—is used by police to refer families in need of support to family violence specialist services, Child Protection, family services and Men's Behaviour Change Programs. Currently these forms are received by fax at each agency.

A new digital solution for the electronic distribution of L17 referrals is being built to replace the fax-based system. This will create an electronic pathway between Victoria Police and the Hubs and other relevant service organisations, making referrals more reliable and improving information sharing between agencies.

VICTORIA POLICE FAMILY VIOLENCE CENTRE OF LEARNING

Victoria Police has identified the establishment of the Victoria Police Family Violence Centre of Learning as a priority to underpin a range of other police reforms.

This centre will provide training in family violence to police that is tailored to their rank, role and career stage. As a result of these reforms, police officers will have an increased awareness of the complex nature and drivers of family violence and an improved capability to deal with the complexity and volume of family violence cases they respond to. Police will be able to accurately identify the primary aggressor, understand and respond to risk, and treat victims with dignity and respect.

SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE COURTS

We will build on the successful existing specialist court models, including the Family Violence Court Division currently operating in Heidelberg and Ballarat, as well as the Specialist Family Violence Service.

A specialist approach to family violence within courts means that victim survivors are heard and they have access to the legal protection and responses necessary for their safety and recovery. Matters are heard by Specialist Magistrates assisted by a specialist team including Family Violence Registrars, police prosecutors, lawyers, and Applicant and Respondent Practitioners. This model will be supported by dynamic information sharing between the courts and other parts of the system to support the appropriate assessment and management of risk. This will lead to more consistent responses across courts. The specialist model will also provide for relevant court matters, including intervention orders, criminal proceedings and Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal applications to be heard together where possible and appropriate, reducing unnecessary delays and improving victim safety.

The court environment itself will also be improved, through providing safe waiting spaces and leveraging innovations in technology. This includes increasing the availability of remote witness facilities so that victims do not feel exposed or put at risk by being in the same small space as a perpetrator. Courts will have greater capacity and capability to work closely and seamlessly with the Support and Safety Hubs. This will help ensure that victim survivors receive the wrap-around services they need and perpetrators are kept in view. There will also be clearer linkages with the federal family law system.

A review of the specialist family violence approach in the Magistrates' Courts found that specialist models significantly improve the court experience for victim survivors. The review forms part of the significant work undertaken by the courts to improve responses to family violence matters, and provides the basis for the court's plan to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations on increasing access to specialist family violence courts across Victoria.

Courts are also working with Victoria Police on fast-tracking family violence matters in court, and other improvements to listing practices, to ensure a more timely response for victims of family violence.

> ***I need to be reassured that I can trust you before I confide in you.***
>
> *– Victim survivor*

Legal assistance

Legal assistance will be provided when people need it most, regardless of where the person enters the family violence system. Legal assistance is an essential support to ensure fair access to the justice system and that people understand their rights and obligations into the future. Access to clear legal information, advice and representation helps people make informed choices about many family issues, including physical safety, parenting, housing, and finances.

Specialist courts and victim-centred service responses

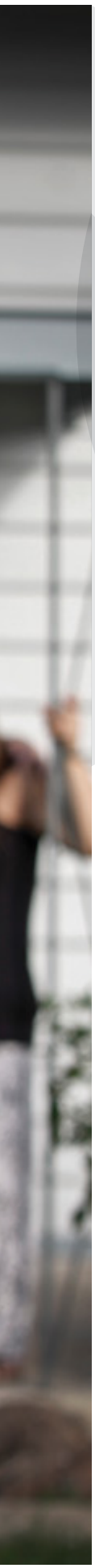
Courts, and the services that support them, are central to our response to family violence. Courts are where justice is delivered for victim survivors and perpetrators face the consequences of their actions. They may also be the place where victims access legal assistance and other services for the first time.

To develop our response, we will:

- Expand specialist approaches in the justice system, including rolling out additional Specialist Family Violence Courts across the state.
- Put victim survivor safety at the forefront of our justice system response through building safer waiting spaces at courts, and making sure legal processes put the victim survivor's safety first including in bail decisions for alleged family violence offenders.
- Ensure immediate support for victim survivors through an improved first response from our frontline services when victim survivors come into contact with the justice system, as well as enhanced access to specialist legal assistance when they need it most.
- Implement alternative and innovative responses, such as restorative justice, and introduce modern laws so that victim survivors can seek and obtain the protection of the justice system when they need it.
- Extend the jurisdiction of the Koori Magistrate and County Courts to include offences where it is alleged that the defendant has contravened a family violence intervention order.

You need to focus on the perpetrator, but they're only in the periphery. It is as though the perpetrator is pulling the strings and all the scrutiny is on me.

– Victim survivors



8 PERPETRATORS ARE HELD TO ACCOUNT, ENGAGED AND CONNECTED

WE WILL:

- Introduce critical law reforms to improve victim safety and perpetrator accountability.
- Make perpetrators much more visible in the system and in our efforts to support adult and child victims.
- Challenge and change perpetrator behaviour to prevent the escalation or recurrence of family violence.
- Improve the range and availability of perpetrator interventions including culturally safe and responsive approaches.
- Enhance the integration of interventions to target the underlying issues associated with increased risk of violence, including expanding mental health and drug and alcohol supports.
- Provide therapeutic responses for young people who use family violence.

Just as we understand that there is not one type of family violence, we understand that there is not one type of person who perpetrates family violence. The perpetration of family violence occurs on a spectrum of both risk and severity. As a result, our system must provide more targeted, tailored responses to these perpetrators, by keeping victim survivors, and their risk of harm, at the centre of our focus.

Some perpetrators have committed horrific acts of family violence which constitute serious criminal offences. For those offenders, we make no apology for a tough approach—to do otherwise would not reflect community expectations.

Victim survivors described to the Royal Commission how perpetrators can use courts to further manipulate women and children. System barriers such as the lack of information sharing between the federal and state courts (which consider matters of family law, child protection, criminal and intervention order matters) can have a detrimental impact on their safety.

To end family violence, we must intervene at the source—the person perpetrating the violence. There must be a coordinated and mutually reinforcing focus on the perpetrator across the new Support and Safety Hubs, police, courts, corrections, legal, health, social services and community agencies. We need to consider these service systems and our laws as working together as part of a web of accountability.

The work that has been undertaken in developing and agreeing the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions through the Council of Australian Governments, provides us with a national direction and commitment to improving the way that all parts of our service system work together to hold perpetrators to account.

LAW REFORMS

Family violence is complex and our laws need to change to respond to this complexity. Victoria has led the way with our laws over recent years. The definition of family violence in the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, has been recognised as a model in Australia in capturing the myriad of ways in which perpetrators seek to gain control over their victim.

As a first stage priority, we will introduce a package of critical law reforms in 2017. This will include amendments to the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* to improve the intervention order process to better protect victim survivors and tighten the bail process so that the risk of family violence is appropriately considered.

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

We do not have the range of interventions in place to effectively target perpetrator behaviour and violence. No service in isolation is likely to make the necessary difference on its own. This includes Men's Behaviour Change Programs that have carried the expectation that they can 'change' a lifetime of attitudes and behaviour in only months.

We need to build better understanding and analysis of what strategies are effective in holding perpetrators to account, and in what circumstances. We need to trial and expand evidence-based services and programs.

The justice system must play a specific role in holding perpetrators to account. Given the dynamic nature of family violence risk, effective justice requires the active involvement of police to keep the perpetrator in view, consistent with the level of risk the perpetrator poses at any time.

For many victim survivors and perpetrators, legal assistance and courts are central to their experience of the family violence system. In particular, the court's authority can be used to monitor perpetrator engagement with programs and hold them accountable.

Expanding specialist responses and capability at court, and access to legal information and advice, will mean that perpetrators understand the legal consequences of their actions, the conditions that the court has placed on them and the consequences for failing to comply with those conditions. Access to these services ensures that perpetrators understand potential issues, including those surrounding parenting.

We have asked the Sentencing Advisory Council to report on 'swift and certain' approaches to family violence offenders in the sentencing process.

Corrections Victoria will play a key role in holding perpetrators to account and managing risk, by administering the sentences of the court and managing perpetrators.

I'm hoping there are more effective and seamless avenues for women to be safe, whether that's to stay in their own home with protective systems around them or whether they choose to leave.

– Community conversations

WHAT IS PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY?

The concept of perpetrator accountability is broad and includes:

- Understanding and responding to the needs and experiences of victims, and their views about the outcomes they are seeking to achieve.
- Prioritising women and children's safety through effective and ongoing risk assessment and management mechanisms.
- Promoting the taking of responsibility by perpetrators for their actions, including the impact on their children.
- Providing a suite of options to assist perpetrators gain insight and awareness of their actions, and to change their behaviour, with such options tailored to the risk profile of the perpetrator.
- Having a strong set of laws and legal processes that incorporate clear consequences for abusive and violent behaviour and failure to comply with court orders and sanctions.
- Fostering collective responsibility among government and non-government agencies, the community and individuals for denouncing perpetrators' use of violence.

EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PERPETRATOR INTERVENTIONS

We have established an Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions. The Committee will be a key source of advice on the suite of interventions that should be developed to hold perpetrators to account. As part of its advisory function, it will consider the models of interventions being used in Victoria and overseas to assess their effectiveness. The Committee will consider Men's Behaviour Change Programs, clinical models such as cognitive behaviour therapy, strengths-based programs, fathering-specific models, online programs, and services for perpetrators from diverse communities.

The Committee members bring a range of expertise from service delivery, academic and lived experience perspectives. It comprises experts with experience in working with perpetrators and victims of family violence, including those from diverse communities. The Committee will be able to engage with other groups including the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council.

A HOLISTIC HEALING APPROACH

Our response prioritises first and foremost the safety of Aboriginal women and children as emphasised by many to the Royal Commission.

Andrew Jackomos, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, stated 'I want to have it acknowledged, that by the evidence, Aboriginal children and their mothers, along with Aboriginal women, are the primary victims of family violence in our community'.

Family-centred healing and dispute resolution approaches, underpinned by victim safety, cultural respect and perpetrator accountability, will be developed as another pathway for victim survivors to recover, thrive and maintain family relationships and wellbeing.

Holistic healing approaches to family violence based on family and community strengthening are particularly relevant to Aboriginal communities and are already used in Koori Courts. A focus on healing derives from the understanding that often Aboriginal people have experienced significant intergenerational trauma.

Our approach to developing holistic healing approaches with Aboriginal communities will be informed by engagement and co-design with the:

- Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum
- Aboriginal Family Violence Co-design Forum, and
- Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions.

The use of therapeutic, family-centred approaches will also be considered as a model to respond to family violence within a broader range of diverse community groups, including elder abuse.

RESPONSES FOR ADOLESCENTS

The distinct nature of adolescents using family violence requires a special therapeutic approach, recognising that this group of people using violence are children and young people who often experience a range of complex problems. A variety of tailored therapeutic programs will be available for those showing early signs of risk.

Adolescent Family Violence Programs are currently run in Geelong, Ballarat and Frankston. These programs focus on therapeutic approaches to adolescent family violence, including skill development and cognitive behavioural strategies. They are delivered through adolescent group work, parent group work and multi-family group work. We are considering these programs as a model which could be further developed as a positive way of addressing family violence.

We will also trial restorative justice processes and diversionary approaches to bring a specific focus on addressing the underlying issues driving family violence. While it should always be a priority to keep a young person in their home, where this is not possible, additional supported accommodation options will be developed and rolled out to complement this suite of therapeutic supports.

CASE STUDY
BRENDAN'S EXPERIENCE

FUTURE

The police who attend have recently undergone family violence training in the Centre of Learning. They interview Brendan and Nora separately. The police arrange an interpreter for Nora and she feels supported to disclose the violence and discuss her safety fears. Brendan is arrested and charged. He is also served with a Family Violence Safety Notice. The police explain separately to both Brendan and Nora (using an interpreter) the nature and purpose of a Family Violence Safety Notice (including the behaviours that constitute family violence), to confirm their understanding.

FUTURE

The police arrest Brendan and hold him on remand overnight. He receives legal advice in the morning and is brought before a magistrate. The magistrate grants bail on the condition that Brendan is provided with intensive case management support and complies with the Family Violence Safety Notice, or any future intervention order that is made.

CURRENT

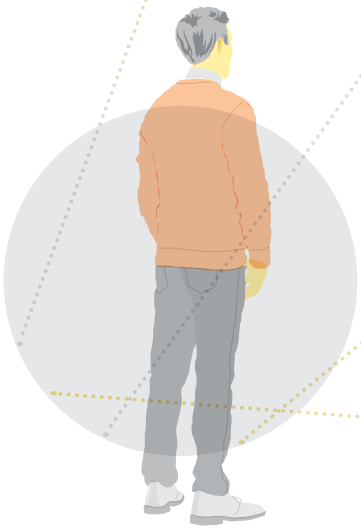
Terrified, Nora leaves the house. Brendan drinks heavily, destroys her clothes, goes to find her and crashes his car. He is arrested and spends the night in the cells. In the morning he is released. As he is not identified as a family violence perpetrator, there is no follow up or referral.

FUTURE

Brendan's case manager arranges accommodation, legal assistance and assessments for mental health, drug and alcohol, parenting and other relevant services. Any intervention offered to Brendan is done so with the goal of reducing the risk to Nora and their child. Brendan builds a rapport with his case manager who reinforces that family violence is unacceptable and that it is Brendan's responsibility to stop these behaviours.

CURRENT

Brendan has started to physically assault Nora. One night and despite her limited English, Nora is so desperate that she calls the police. The police, who have not received any recent training in family violence, arrive and interview the couple together. Brendan is very articulate and denies hitting Nora. Nora is scared and doesn't say anything. The police leave visibly irritated. Brendan physically assaults Nora again.



CURRENT

Nora goes into labour. Brendan is drunk and is refused entry to the ward. He becomes abusive and the police are called. He is arrested and released again. Prior to going into labour, Nora made a successful application for an interim intervention order. The following day, Brendan is served with the interim order by police, but is given no verbal explanation of it. Brendan cannot read well.

CURRENT

Brendan breaches the intervention order by going to the house he rents with Nora. Police attend and arrest him. He is given bail on the condition he engages with support services. He follows up on a few of the referrals he is provided, but does not have a case manager to engage or connect him. He is placed on a number of waiting lists, the longest of which is five months. When he finally gets a place, he attends, but does not engage.

FUTURE

When Brendan appears before the court, represented by his lawyer, the criminal charges and the intervention order matter are heard together. Brendan is placed on a Community Correction Order (CCO) with judicial monitoring, supervision and other assessment and treatment conditions. The magistrate hears from both Brendan and the police. The magistrate speaks directly to Brendan and he leaves the court understanding his obligations and the consequences of failing to meet them. He continues the work he has begun, assisted by his case manager to address his violent and controlling behaviours.

Brendan's partner, Nora, discovers that she is pregnant. This accelerates the pattern of coercion and control that Brendan has been displaying over a long period of time. Nora is aware that Brendan grew up in a violent household where his grandfather regularly physically assaulted his grandmother, mother and aunt. Brendan stops Nora from leaving the house and says that the government will cancel her visa if she complains.

9 PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE IS SYSTEMIC AND ENDURING

WE WILL:

Create an environment in which information is shared between agencies to keep victims safe.

Build the capacity and capability of a diverse range of services and workforces.

Change the way we deliver funding to services so they are more coordinated and flexible.

Create new governance arrangements to achieve enduring system reform across portfolios.

Develop a robust evidence base from which decisions can be made.

SHARING INFORMATION AND WORKING MORE EFFECTIVELY

Sharing information can help keep victims safe and provide a better response to family violence. Government departments and service providers must work together to share information, keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account. However, current privacy laws can be complex to understand and apply.

The Coronial Inquest into the Death of Luke Batty recommended that barriers to information sharing be identified and removed. The Royal Commission agreed and proposed new laws that would allow greater information sharing guided by the following principles:

- **Simplicity and clarity:** the legislation be clear and succinct so it can be effectively applied by front-line workers.
- **Safety first:** the legislation recalibrate the balance of a victim survivor's right to safety and a perpetrator's right to privacy in favour of the victim survivor.
- **Appropriate protections:** the legislation replace existing privacy protections only to the extent necessary and also preserve victim survivors' control over sharing of their information.

In early 2017 we will introduce legislation into Parliament to create a 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. This will include the ability to share information about perpetrators without their consent.

INFORMATION SHARING LEGISLATIVE REFORM

VICTIM

A person at risk of family violence, for example:

- a person applying for or under the protection of a Family Violence Safety Notice or Family Violence Intervention Order
- an 'Affected Family Member' in a police family violence incident and/or L17 referral

CONSENT REQUIRED

Unless:

- there is a serious threat
- there is a threat and obtaining consent would be unsafe, unreasonable or impractical.

PERPETRATOR

A person who is a source of family violence risk, for example:

- a respondent to a Family Violence Safety Notice or Family Violence Intervention Order
- and 'Other Party' in a police family violence incident and/or L17 referral

NO CONSENT REQUIRED

THIRD PARTY

Associated parties whose information is relevant to risk assessment or risk management (e.g. criminal associates of the perpetrator)

CONSENT REQUIRED

Unless:

- there is a serious threat
- there is a threat and obtaining consent would be unsafe, unreasonable or impractical.

INFORMATION SHARING PLATFORM

WHO

Prescribed specialist family violence organisations, government agencies, and other relevant organisations will form part of the 'trusted zone' and will be authorised to share information.

All prescribed organisations **must respond to information requests** unless an exemption applies.

Complaints about privacy breaches can be made to the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection or the Health Services Commissioner.

WHY

Information can be shared for the purposes of undertaking risk assessment and/or risk management for victims of family violence.

A **good faith defence** protects workers who share information in good faith.

WHAT

Prescribed organisations can:

- proactively share with other prescribed organisations (e.g. a community housing provider could share information with a specialist family violence organisation to manage the safety of a woman experiencing family violence)
- request information from other prescribed organisations (e.g. a specialist family violence organisation could request details about a perpetrator from Corrections Victoria).

The **regime will be reviewed** after two years, and then again after five years.

IMPROVING MULTI-AGENCY INFORMATION SHARING—THE CENTRAL INFORMATION POINT

A statewide Central Information Point will be established to provide up-to-date information to assist risk assessment and risk management, in particular for medium to high-risk family violence cases. Timely information sharing will ensure that the risks posed by perpetrators of family violence are effectively managed and strategies to keep victims safe are in place.

The Central Information Point will consist of a co-located multi-agency team with representatives from key government departments who are authorised to obtain information from their respective databases and make that information available to organisations empowered to undertake risk assessment and management. The Central Information Point will provide critical and timely information on perpetrators of family violence to Support and Safety Hubs and other prescribed organisations to better manage risk to victims and improve the quality of risk assessments.

We are working with public sector agencies and non-government organisations in the sector to establish a service system that realises the full potential of information sharing and improves outcomes for those experiencing family violence.

IMPROVING HOW WE ASSESS AND MANAGE RISK

The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework will be redeveloped to provide a consistent approach to risk assessment and management so that victim survivors, including children, are kept safe through comprehensive assessment processes. This approach will establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities across the family violence service system, including specialist family violence, mainstream and universal services. The redevelopment will be informed by recommendations arising from the Coronial Inquest into the Death of Luke Batty.

We will produce a comprehensive framework and operational practice guidance to support consistent family violence risk identification, assessment and management. Training for prescribed organisations will be rolled out. The framework will be embedded in legislation.

BUILDING WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

Our reforms will only be as effective as the people delivering them. Our new ways of working will require an effective, well supported, and multidisciplinary workforce, with the right people in the right positions across Victoria. We also know that we need to build the capacity of our specialist family violence sector; recognising the significant expertise, experience and the crucial role they play.

We need a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Victorian community, and is able to provide services that are accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory. We need workforces with a sophisticated understanding of the nature and dynamics of family violence, and ability to use this knowledge to assess risk and plan for safety; and with a deep knowledge of the underlying drivers of family violence and the capability to lead primary prevention efforts. Sustaining and building specialisation in preventing and responding to family violence is absolutely critical in these reforms.

We will develop a 10-Year Industry Plan for family violence prevention and response by December 2017. We have established an Industry Taskforce to guide the development of the 10-Year Industry Plan. Membership of the Taskforce includes expert stakeholders from across the family violence and sexual assault services, prevention organisations, community services, justice and education sectors, as well as from peak bodies and unions.

The 10-Year Industry Plan will build on work underway to pave the way for a more systematic approach to workforce planning and development of the specialist family violence sector and the prevention workforce. The plan will address issues in increasing the diversity of the workforce; health and wellbeing; safety; wages and conditions; and career pathways.

The 10-Year Industry Plan will ensure that workers across different sectors have access to specialist secondary support, and the high-quality training they need—including family violence risk assessment and risk management training, and training in culturally sensitive practices so that services can provide effective and responsive interventions. The 10-Year Industry Plan will guide the roll out of the revised Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework.

As well as strengthening the specialist family violence and prevention sectors, the 10-Year Industry Plan will also build the capability of workforces within universal services, such as general practitioners, maternal and child health nurses, teachers and counsellors as well as the wider community, justice system, government and private sectors. These workforces will be equipped to identify and respond to all forms of family violence, with clear referral pathways to specialist services. They will also have knowledge of the drivers of family violence and understand their role in primary prevention.

The 10-Year Industry Plan will be a roadmap for building a highly skilled and highly valued social services workforce, positioning Victoria as a leader in the delivery of best practice primary prevention initiatives and services for people experiencing or using family violence.

A NEW APPROACH TO FUNDING SERVICES

Simply spending more money on family violence services will not be enough. If we want to make a real difference for people, we need to fundamentally change how we approach funding. We are not meeting demand and we cannot accurately predict how demand will grow.

Short-term funding arrangements hamper innovation, evaluation, staff retention and security. Narrowly defined program funding forces individuals to seek support from many services at the same time. Complicated funding combinations are difficult to navigate for service providers and those seeking support.

A crisis-driven approach to funding has led to piecemeal, inconsistent and short-term funding for prevention. We will never achieve generational reform in family violence without a sustained investment in prevention.

Our new funding system will be underpinned by a thorough understanding of the cost of family violence to society; an accurate picture of current and future demand; and knowledge about what it costs to deliver quality services. Our new approach will provide simpler and more flexible funding for organisations so that they can focus on spending where it's most needed and has the most impact. Our funding principles will also preference Aboriginal organisations to deliver services for Aboriginal people.

This will mean that people will receive effective, coordinated support that is person-centred and provides them with as much choice as possible. We will also provide dedicated funding for consistent evaluation, so we can track outcomes and understand what works, and use this knowledge to drive future service design and delivery.

SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

In order to achieve enduring family violence, justice and social system reform, significant changes to system governance and its underlying structures are needed. Getting this right is crucial if we are to avoid unnecessary complexity, duplication, service gaps and inconsistent practices.

The new system governance includes:

- a Prevention Agency
- a Coordination Agency
- the Centre for Workforce Excellence, and
- the Victorian Centre for Data Insights.

We have established a Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor who will hold government to account for delivering reforms that protect victim survivors keep families safe and hold perpetrators to account.

In addition we will establish a Family Violence Parliamentary Committee.

STRENGTHENING OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

While there has been significant research in our understanding of family violence, there is still a great deal which we do not know or do not measure. The development of detailed data is vital for the effectiveness and longevity of our reforms. Our work to develop a Family Violence Index for Victoria will help us better understand the data gaps, and inform development of indicators to measure our performance and understand our impact to reduce and prevent family violence.

Our new approach will rely on better data collection and evaluation of funded family violence services to build an evidence-base for what is working, what needs to be adjusted, and how we can effectively direct resources to the responses that make a difference. We will continue to build the evidence around different forms of family violence and violence against women to enable us to prevent it from occurring in the first place.

CENTRE FOR WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

The establishment of a Centre for Workforce Excellence will lead initiatives designed to boost the capabilities of specialist family violence, primary prevention and social service workforces.

The Centre will play a key role in research, identifying core skills and capabilities across workforces, promoting best practice and contributing to the development of formal workforce training.

VICTORIAN CENTRE FOR DATA INSIGHTS

The Victorian Centre for Data Insights will support Victorian Government departments and agencies to improve the way in which they collect information and build data analytics capability.

The Centre will have a whole-of-government role to lead the better use of data for decision-making in Victoria (including through conducting data linkage and analytics) and to support the Coordination Agency to gain a better understanding about common and complex clients and how best to target and tailor services to support them.

As family violence workers, we should feel proud and respected, with adequate support and resourcing and a toolkit of effective strategies.

– Community conversations

10

OUR NEXT STEPS

10 YEAR INVESTMENT PLAN

In March 2017, the Victorian Government will announce a 10 Year Investment Plan to implement our family violence reforms and deliver on the actions outlined in *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*. This funding package will be aligned to the Family Violence Outcomes Framework and designed to deliver on our vision. This investment will be in addition to the initial $572 million announced in April 2016.

The package will be based on a new approach to preventing and responding to family violence. It will provide funding certainty for service providers, moving away from short-term investments in crisis responses. It will also involve new models of funding that are more flexible, equitable, responsive and person-centred and are based on the evaluation of programs.

ROLLING ACTION PLANS

We will be releasing Rolling Action Plans that will detail the actions and initiatives to achieve our shared vision of a Victoria free from family violence. The first plan will be released in March 2017.

Subsequent plans will be developed every three years and will reflect new knowledge and evidence. The plans will show how we are tracking against our outcomes.

The progress of our reforms and each Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendation can be tracked on our publicly accessible, easy-to-use website: **vic.gov.au/familyviolenceplan**

DRIVING REFORM THROUGH THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

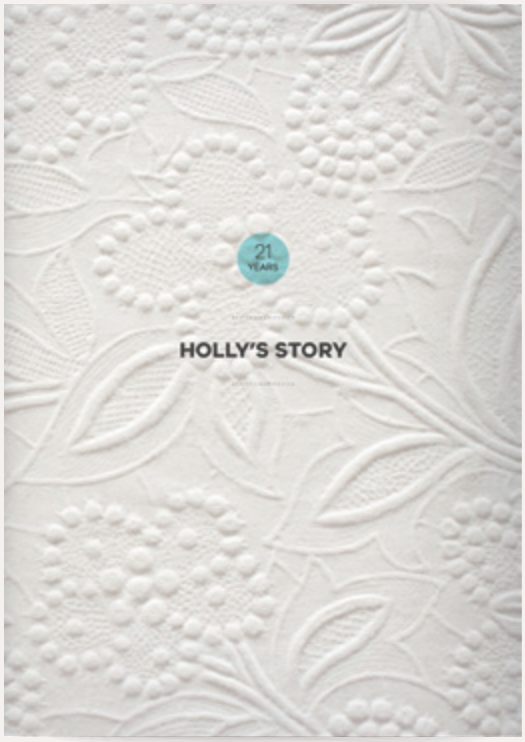
All governments need to work together to progress urgent national action and implement many of the Royal Commission's recommendations. Victoria will be at the forefront of this drive for change and for greater collaboration at the national level, including:

- Changes to the family law system so that state and federal courts work together to share information, provide better client access, and protect victim survivors.
- A new Medicare item for family violence counselling.
- Paid family violence leave in the National Employment Standards.
- Protection for migrant victim survivors of family violence under Australian law.
- Addressing funding shortfalls and advocating for more funding for homelessness and legal services—giving services which are under pressure the certainty they deserve.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change is the beginning of an ongoing conversation with the community. Our commitment to collaboration and engagement will continue throughout the lifetime of these reforms. We will work together with victim survivors, the sector and the community, in particular through the Family Violence Steering Committee and Victim Survivors' Advisory Council.

Over the coming months, there will be a range of consultations across Victoria about this Plan and its key elements. We look forward to the continued engagement of all Victorians in achieving our shared vision of a Victoria free from family violence.



HOLLY'S STORY

We need to ensure that children's experience of family violence is identified in its own right, children are seen and heard, and their needs are met. Through our work with victim survivors, we heard from individuals who had experienced family violence as children. Holly's first memory is of family violence. In her story, Holly shares her experiences of family violence and the service system, from a women's refuge with her mother and siblings, to out-of-home care and independent living. It is a powerful and moving story of struggle, loss, courage, determination and hope for the future. Holly's story is available as a separate document and online at **vic.gov.au/familyviolenceplan**

ENDING FAMILY VIOLENCE:
VICTORIA'S PLAN FOR CHANGE

Publishing and further information

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change presents the Victorian Government's 10 Year family violence reform plan

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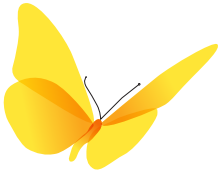

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