

Responding to Family Violence – A Whole of Government Response

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Abstract

Family violence affects all communities and is a profound cause of entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage; it has significant personal, social, health and economic costs. For example: family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years; Access Economics has estimated the total indirect and direct costs of family violence for Australia in 2002-2003 at \$8 billion.

In 2002 Victoria launched the Women's Safety Strategy, to examine violence against women (family violence, sexual assault and workplace violence) and established a Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence to develop an integrated response to family violence in Victoria. Details of the Victorian Government's integrated approach to responding to family violence more effectively were announced in the social policy statement *A Fairer Victoria* in May 2005.

Support to find new accommodation, and maintain that housing, while dealing with the consequences of family violence, are key responses for victims of family violence. However, overseas and Australian research indicates that the most effective solutions involve a whole of government, multi-agency response. This should include a strong police and judicial response, and well targeted human service responses, including housing for women, children and men. All services need to work together to break the cycle of violence.

As part of the whole of government response, Victoria is diversifying its approach to providing housing and support, moving beyond the secure refuge model. In future there will be more housing choices for women and children, including the option of remaining in the family home with extra support when it is safe to do so. Alternative emergency accommodation will be provided for men if this will help women and children to remain in the family home.

These housing responses will be complemented by improved men's behaviour change programs, more counselling for women and children, and stronger linkages between support services, police responses and legal processes through the courts.

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1. The Victorian Policy and Service Delivery Context

Family violence is a major issue of concern for many communities and governments around the world and is increasingly recognised as constituting a violation of human rights, most often perpetrated by men against women. Anecdotal evidence suggests that family violence occurs at a much higher rate than that reported to police, courts or support services. In Victoria, various steps have been taken since the late 1990s¹ to respond to family violence. These initiatives have drawn on overseas research on prevalence of family violence, examined models implemented in other countries to address family violence, and analysed the cost and impact of family violence on families and the economy.

During the late 1990s work commenced within the Victorian Department of Human Services, (the department) to develop a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of family violence responses. This work culminated in the release in February 2002 of the *Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework*, which examined ways in which the services funded through the department could more effectively respond to families experiencing family violence.

Following the release of the Victorian Government's *Growing Victoria Together* policy statement in 2001, which committed to improving the lives of vulnerable Victorians and building safe communities, work commenced on a whole of government basis to address family violence, including exploration of appropriate responses to family violence in indigenous communities.

In December 2001 the Victorian Office of Women's Policy released *Key Directions in Women's Safety. A co-ordinated approach to reducing violence against women. Valuing Victoria's Women*. The *Women's Safety Strategy* that set out policy directions to address violence against women, including family violence, sexual assault and workplace violence, followed this document in October 2002. To facilitate development of new responses, committees comprising senior cross-government departmental staff and sector representatives were established, including the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence.

In recognition that family violence is a prevalent issue in Indigenous communities the Victorian Government established the Indigenous Family Violence Task Force in May 2002. The Task Force engaged Indigenous communities in extensive consultations about

¹ The authors acknowledge the contributions from colleagues in the Department of Human Services (Housing and Community Building, Office for Children, Policy and Strategic Projects), the Department for Victorian Communities (Office of Women's Policy), particularly Ms Rachael Green, and the Department of Justice and Victoria Police, particularly Ms Tania Farha, to the development of the reform approach and the material presented in this paper. This paper also draws on the work of the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence. Senior managers from the Department of Human Services (Housing and Community Building, Office for Children) are members of the Steering Committee.

the development of community-led strategies to address the escalating level of family violence and to make recommendations in relation to culturally appropriate, integrated and holistic strategies for addressing the problem. Following presentation of the final Task Force report in December 2003, the Government's response to the Indigenous Family Violence Task Force report, the *Indigenous Family Violence Strategy*, was released in October 2004. Funding was provided to establish both time out centres and healing centres in order to address the issue of family violence in Indigenous communities through a holistic community-based approach.

Most recently, in May 2005, the Victorian Government made a major commitment to address family violence in its social policy statement *A Fairer Victoria: Creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage*, accompanied by additional funding through the State Budget. The integrated approach to addressing family violence announced in *A Fairer Victoria* is the focus of this paper.

1.1 Support and Accommodation Services provided through Housing and Community Building

The Victorian Department of Human Services provides funding of over \$21 million per annum to support services addressing family violence. This comprises \$15.5 million per annum for the crisis accommodation and outreach support services, a further \$2.8 million per annum for counselling and recovery services and men's behaviour change services and \$2.65 million for responses to indigenous family violence². In the past these services have often operated in isolation from other responses and with minimal collaboration.

To date the main Victorian human services response to women and children experiencing family violence has been funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) administered by the Housing and Community Building Division of the department, with some further support and recovery services and men's behaviour change services funded through the Office for Children. Housing and Community Building Division currently provides funding to 68 community managed organisations to deliver information and referral, outreach services and crisis accommodation to women and women with children experiencing family violence.

Many families experiencing family violence also access support via the broader SAAP service system and transitional accommodation. SAAP services (total recurrent funding of \$80 million provided for SAAP in 2005-06) are available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and include crisis and transitional support services for young people, families and single adults. In Victoria the SAAP response is complemented by the Transitional Housing Management (THM) program with recurrent funding of \$37 million per annum and the availability of Housing Establishment Funds (HEF) of \$6.9 million per annum. THM provides housing and homelessness information and referral services, and access and tenancy management to over 3,500 transitional housing properties.

² Current funding levels as at the commencement of 2005-2006. Prior to the allocation of any new funds.

HEF provides funds for rental arrears, rent in advance, short-term crisis accommodation and limited funds for essential items such as whitegoods and storage and removal expenses.

2. New Insights into Family Violence

For many decades family violence was seen as a personal problem to be dealt with in private by the individuals concerned, and in some instances as an area for intervention by welfare services. Those welfare or human services responses focused on a secure refuge model, whereby women and women with children left their home, and in many cases their local community, in an attempt to find safety and support. This approach neither dealt with the underlying causes of family violence nor increased community understanding of family violence as a major social problem.

More recently, there has been increasing recognition in Australia and internationally that family violence is also a criminal matter that requires a strong response from the justice system. This response needs to focus on the men who use violence, but also support women to pursue action through the courts. A stronger justice system can hold men accountable for their violence and act as a potential deterrent to the use of violence in the future.

There is also increasing evidence of the health consequences of family violence, both for individuals and for the public health system. Similarly, the economic costs to local communities and national economies are now better understood. Family violence was identified by the World Health Organisation, in its *World Report on Violence and Health*³ (WHO 2002) as a significant social, economic and health problem requiring immediate and urgent attention by a number of bodies at the international, national and local levels.

Exploration of possible new human services and justice responses has highlighted the fact that the personal, social and economic consequences of family violence cannot be tackled effectively by either human services or the justice system working alone. It is now acknowledged that there are a number of reasons for moving to an integrated service response where human services including health services complement the actions of police and the courts. For example:

- Over 80% of violence against women is not reported to the police.⁴
- Reasons for non-reporting may include lack of confidence in the justice system and its processes and penalties, or conversely, reluctance to potentially expose the person who uses violence to jail, as well as anxiety about the possible consequences of intervention by human services.⁵

³ WHO, 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health*, World Health Organisation, Geneva

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996, *Women's Safety Australia Survey*

⁵ Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2004, *Review of Family Violence Laws: Consultation Paper*

- Violence has complex emotional consequences and these can affect a woman's capacity to participate in legal processes. Women are much more likely to seek a justice solution when they are well supported and have the assistance of services who can advocate on their behalf.⁶

3. Impact of Family Violence in Victoria

Family violence is a significant problem in Victoria, resulting in serious economic and social consequences for families, communities and society. Family violence affects all communities and is a profound cause of entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage.

While the actual incidence of family violence is hard to establish, a relatively recent broad population based survey,⁷ indicated that one in five women experience violence in an intimate relationship at some time in their adult lives.

The extent of this problem is also indicated in other research and data collections:

- Family violence is associated with wide-ranging and persistent effects on women's physical and mental health, being the leading contributor to preventable death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 45 years. For women in this age group, family violence is responsible for more of the disease burden than many well-known risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.⁸
- Family violence costs the Australian economy an estimated \$8.1 billion dollars per year, with around \$2 billion of this being lost to the economy in Victoria⁹.
- Victoria Police data indicates that family violence incident reports to the Victorian Police increased from 19,597 in 1999-2000 to over 28,000 in 2003-04 and 29,162 in 2004-2005. Demand for a police response to family violence has increased by 7% each year over the last 10 years. In the three years between 1999-2000 and 2002-2003, there was an increase in reporting of 45 per cent.
- SAAP provided support and accommodation service episodes in 2003-2004 to over 31,450 women and children. Over a third (10,600) of these episodes were provided to women and women with children who indicated that family violence was the main reason for seeking assistance. For women with children accessing SAAP services family violence was the primary reason for seeking assistance 44 per cent of the time.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996, *Women's Safety Australia Survey*

⁸ VicHealth, 2004, *The Health Costs of Violence*

⁹ Access Economics, 2004, *The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy*, Commonwealth of Australia

¹⁰ Australian Government, 2005, *Homeless people in SAAP*, SAAP NDC Annual Report 2003-2004, Victoria Supplementary tables

Of particular concern is the impact of violence on children:

- Children were present at 48 per cent of Victorian police attendances for family violence incidents in 2002-03.¹¹
- Department of Human Services child protection data shows that in 2003-04 family violence was found to be a factor in 42 per cent of cases where child abuse or neglect was investigated and in 52 per cent of those cases in which abuse or neglect was substantiated.
- Other data indicates that child abuse and family violence co-exist in between 30 and 60 per cent of cases.¹² Children exposed to both family violence and child abuse are at increased risk of developing health and behavioural problems.
- A study of 5000 12-20 year old Australians from all States and Territories in 1998-99 found that ‘witnessing parental family violence has emerged as the strongest predictor of perpetration of violence in young people’s own intimate relationships.’¹³

4. The Challenge and Opportunities in Victoria

Awareness of family violence and demand for services has increased dramatically in recent years as a result of education campaigns and a growing willingness to report family violence, and demand is still growing.

Victoria’s capacity to respond has not kept pace. There has been no consistent way of dealing with reported incidents, many calls to crisis lines have gone unanswered, and there are gaps in ongoing support and in the processes for holding perpetrators accountable. In 2003-04, 42 per cent of family violence incidents attended by Victorian police were repeat attendances. These high levels of re-offence reflect the fact that optimal responses are not being delivered to those affected by family violence. Victorians involved in incidents of family violence are experiencing fragmented and inconsistent responses instead of a cohesive family violence service system.

A coordinated response will ensure that steps are taken to prevent repeated and escalating violence and to reduce the impact of violence on individuals, families and communities. Integrated approaches have been applied elsewhere at a local level where the operation of such initiatives is relatively easy to influence, monitor and evaluate. In Victoria this approach will be implemented right across a state jurisdiction. Adapting the model for this purpose has necessitated taking account of the size and diversity of Victoria’s population and the needs of both metropolitan and rural and regional communities.

¹¹ Victorian Community Council Against Violence. 2002, *Victorian Family Violence Database First Report*

¹² Laing, L 2000, *Children, young people and domestic violence*, Issues Paper 2, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

¹³ Indermaur, D 2001, “Young Australians and Domestic Violence”, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 195*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

Responses developed need to be cognisant of and responsive to the needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and to Indigenous people. Women from CALD communities may be particularly vulnerable to violence against them as they may be less likely to have social supports and economic resources to assist them to leave a violent relationship. Indigenous people are ten times more likely to become victims or perpetrators of family violence.¹⁴

By implementing reforms Victoria has an opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of many Victorian families affected by family violence, and to make a significant contribution to the national effort to refine policies and practices in the response to and prevention of family violence.

5. Reform Steps Already Taken in Victoria

As previously indicated, addressing family violence has been identified as a priority for the Victorian Government. This is reflected in a number of policy initiatives and documents released in recent years. Some of these are:

- *Growing Victoria Together*
- *Women's Safety Strategy*
- *Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework*
- *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*
- *Indigenous Family Violence Strategy*
- *Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence.*

A number of these policy statements and initiatives have identified a need for greater integration of the various government departments, the courts, police and non-government organisations, which provide services both to men who use violence and to women and children who experience violence.

Since the release of the *Women's Safety Strategy* in 2002, two new initiatives have been implemented, the *Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* and the Family Violence Division of the Magistrates' Court. These initiatives are complemented by work undertaken through the *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*.

5.1 *Implementation of the Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence*

Outlining a new approach to responding to family violence in Victoria, the Code is driven by the principle that every incident will receive a response within the powers available to the police according to individual circumstances. If an offence is committed, action must be taken. The Code provides more flexibility in the range of responses for police and increases the effectiveness of monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

¹⁴ *Victorian Government Response to The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force and Final Report, 2004*

The Code was launched on 31 August 2004 and already its impact is being felt in terms of data trends and practice change. Over 6000 Victorian police have participated in training in responding to incidents of family violence.

During the twelve months since the release of the Code police have laid 5,185 charges arising from family violence incidents, an increase of 75%. Police have also increased by 72% the numbers of intervention orders applied for on behalf of women and children experiencing family violence. All police responses to family violence now include either an active referral or information on available support services being provided to women. Police are actively working with support agencies to jointly implement coordinated local area responses including the provision of fax back information and the provision of outreach family violence support services to police stations. Links and feedback between police and human services are creating better responses for individuals affected by family violence.

5.2 *Creation of a Family Violence Division of the Magistrates' Court*

A Family Violence Court Division of the Magistrates' Court has been established under the *Magistrates' Court (Family Violence) Act 2004* in two locations, Heidelberg and Ballarat. These two courts commenced operation in June 2005.

The three main purposes of the Act and the courts are to:

- Simplify access to the justice system for individuals experiencing family violence and increase or promote the safety of those individuals
- Increase the accountability of individuals who have used family violence and encourage them to change their behaviour
- Increase the protection of children exposed to family violence.

Linkages between family violence support services and court responses have also been created in other areas of Melbourne. For example, the family violence outreach service in the western area of Melbourne has been active in providing support to women attending the local magistrates' court in Sunshine, and the family violence outreach service in eastern metropolitan Melbourne has been supporting women who remain in the home under an interim intervention order with exclusion provisions. Both these services delivery models have resulted in improved integrated working arrangements and an increase in the understanding of the roles of support services and the courts.

5.3 *Victorian Homelessness Strategy Initiatives*

The implementation of an integrated family violence response is further complemented by major work being undertaken by Housing and Community Building through the implementation of the *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*.

Initiatives have implemented joined-up government partnerships to address support and accommodation for people leaving correctional services, people who have mental health needs, people with drug and alcohol issues, young people leaving the juvenile justice system, young people leaving care and people undergoing a drug treatment order through the Drug Court in Dandenong. These initiatives have resulted in more than \$6 million in additional support funds for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Further work is being undertaken to improve referral pathways and access to the support system through the development of 'front doors' as clear entry and referral points. These are being established in four areas in metropolitan and rural Victoria: the Eastern Metropolitan Region, the Hume Rural Region, part of the Southern Metropolitan Region and inner metropolitan Melbourne. These services will also trial common assessment and referral processes and provide a response to match the identified need without the person who is homeless or experiencing family violence having to visit several agencies and retell their story.

This work is important in providing models to inform an integrated approach to family violence services, and to ensure linkages between family violence services and other housing and homelessness assistance services where required.

Family Violence Private Rental Brokerage Pilot

Under the *Victorian Homelessness Strategy*, a pilot approach to assisting women to establish and maintain private rental brokerage was funded for three years, from 2002-2003 to 2004-2005, to test new models of accommodation for women and women with children experiencing family violence. Women and children who leave a violent relationship often experience lower family income and can struggle to achieve their previous levels of resources over a significant period of time. Women and children therefore often experience difficulty accessing the private rental market and have lower disposable income, making sustainable housing difficult to maintain.

Thomson Goodall Associates Pty Ltd undertook an evaluation of this pilot project during 2004 and 2005.

Findings from the evaluation indicated that over a two year period an estimated 1,127 households were assisted which included an estimated 1,800 accompanying children. Family violence had been occurring in a range from one year to 18 years prior to the women accessing assistance through the project. Approximately 78% of households assisted were women with children and the average age of women assisted was 31 years. About 18% of women assisted were born overseas, however the majority of overseas born women assisted spoke English well. Seven percent of the women identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Women assisted by the project had been in relationships with a perpetrator varying from 18 months to 20 years.

The most commonly reported theme was that the brokerage assistance was the catalyst that enabled women to leave the violent situation, and to live in safety with their children.

The value of the project is reflected in some of the comments by participants to the evaluators:

- *The help I received made me achieve something I have wanted to do for a long time.*
- *My situation was desperate without this help; I had no one else to help us. We are safe now.*
- *I could never have got out on my own without the help and support I received. I would still be in a violent situation.*
- *The service allowed me to move away from a violent husband.*

Some women reported that the rental subsidy enabled them to purchase essentials such as food, essentials for infants and children, and whitegoods such as a fridge and washing machine:

- *I hoped I might not need it – but it helped me meet unexpected expenses I could not have met.*

Some women reported that the rental subsidy enabled them to clear debts and therefore ‘get ahead’:

- *It helped me a great deal to get back on track with our lives (me and my children).*
- *It gave me dignity and independence when I had no home, no belongings and an uncertain future.*

Many women used terms such as ‘invaluable’, ‘overwhelming’, ‘huge’, ‘tremendous’, ‘fantastic’ when they spoke about the assistance they received:

- *I can live safely now with my little son.*
- *The service made a big difference to my life, and children’s life. We have much less stress.*
- *I can’t express enough gratitude to this service and the people involved. At a time when I thought there was no hope, hope was provided through this wonderful vehicle. I know there are a lot of women and children out there that need what was offered to me and my family. Please tell them! Thank you so very much.*

Several women responded that the perpetrator had always had control of the money, so they had not been able to escape previously, unless they went to a refuge, which some women do not want to do. The project provided an alternative avenue of housing and support assistance for many women experiencing family violence who had not had previous contact with support services.

Several women reported that the assistance they received from the project made a significant difference and had a positive impact on them and their families.

- *I didn’t want a whole lot of moves; my son was settled in at kinder – it meant I didn’t have to move again.*

- It made an amazing, huge difference – I now have the ultimate life I've dreamed of.

The evaluation confirmed that there is a clear need for time-limited transitional assistance through a private rental subsidy and specialist housing assistance program to help women and women with children who are escaping family violence and who require mainly a housing intervention together with some short to medium term ongoing contact, practical assistance, referral and support.

6. Victoria's Approach – an Integrated, Multi-agency Response

Development of Victoria's response to family violence has been informed by work undertaken by a number of jurisdictions around the world that have responded to these challenges and implemented an integrated model of response. First developed in Duluth in Minnesota USA, this model has also been applied elsewhere in the US and in various localities in the UK, Canada, and New Zealand. It also formed the basis of the ACT family violence project in Australia.

A strengthened justice response is a major component of the integrated model. However the justice response must occur within the context of an integrated multi-agency response involving services providing crisis accommodation and support, transitional outreach support, victim support, counselling, and legal advice. An integrated response should also involve voluntary responses to men who use violence, such as men's behaviour change programs, that are able to challenge men to end their use of violence. This is especially significant when considering that not all women will want to report their experiences of violence to the relevant authorities and that many women, while they want the violence to stop, do not want to leave their relationship.

An integrated response needs to be designed to ensure that women receive an appropriate response, regardless of the pathway through which they choose to receive assistance. The integrated model has been refined on the basis of over two decades of research and practice experience, and aims to demonstrate that when community services and justice agencies work together in a consistent and complementary way, significant positive outcomes can be achieved such as increases in arrest and prosecution rates, reductions in repeat offences and, in some areas, reductions in family violence related homicides.

6.1 A Whole of Government Approach

The development of an integrated family violence response in Victoria has involved a significant change in the approaches taken by ministers, government departments and the family violence sector. This has included establishing collaborative working relationships between four Victorian Government agencies: Department for Victorian Communities, Department of Human Services (Housing and Community Building, Office for Children), Department of Justice and Victoria Police.

Five ministers¹⁵ supported the development of the integrated approach to family violence services and the passage of proposals through the May 2005 budget processes. Central agencies facilitated one submission co-signed by all ministers - this was the first time a budget proposal had progressed as a whole of government bid rather than separate bids per portfolio, and provided a breakthrough in bureaucratic processes. The collaboration involved in developing the integrated model and the funding proposal provides a strong basis for partnerships across government departments and service providers in moving to a new way of delivering services.

As indicated above, responding to family violence more effectively is a key component of the Government's social policy action plan released in 2005: *A Fairer Victoria: Creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage*.

A Fairer Victoria strengthens Victoria's responses to people experiencing disadvantage and commits over \$788.2 million over four years to new initiatives. *A Fairer Victoria* sets out 85 actions the Government will take within fourteen major strategies to address disadvantage in Victoria. The focus of these actions is to improve access to services, strengthen assistance for disadvantaged groups and areas of Victoria, reduce barriers to opportunity and ensure that people get the help they need at critical times in their lives.

A Fairer Victoria committed \$35 million over four years to deliver a new approach to family violence services in Victoria. Funding of \$28 million over four years has been provided to the Department of Human Services (Housing and Community Building and Office for Children) with a further \$7 million over four years provided to the Department of Justice and Department for Victorian Communities to implement an integrated family violence response.

7. Features of the New Service Model

The new approach focuses on:

- Improving the immediate response to family violence incidents
- Expanding choices of housing and support
- Implementing a new approach to dealing with men who use violence
- Providing more counselling programs to break the cycle of violence
- Better coordinating services.

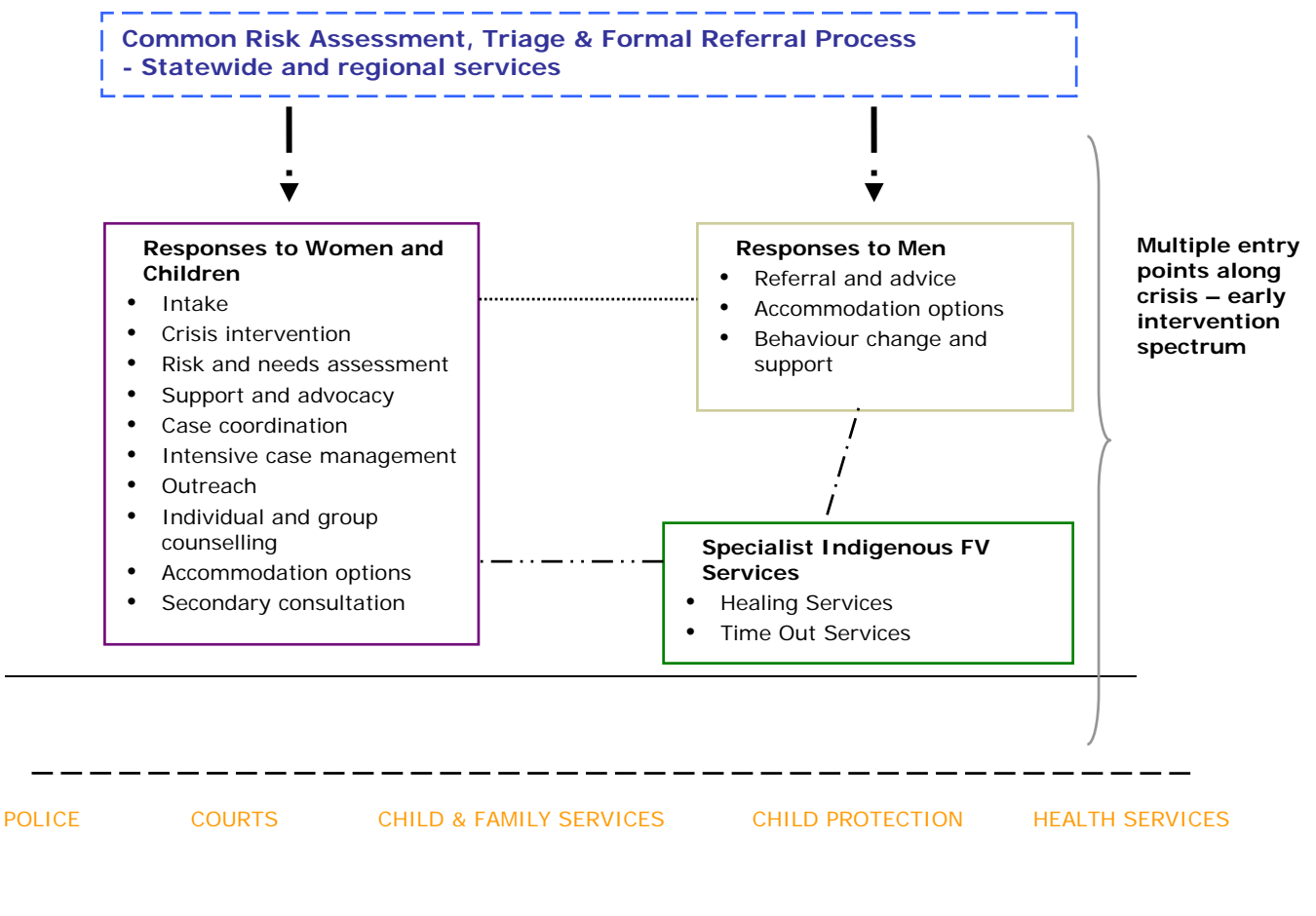
The new approach to address family violence in Victoria will establish greater consistency between different services available throughout the State and improve capacity to meet service demand. It seeks to reduce levels of re-victimisation and re-offence by equipping women and children who experience violence with the support they need and combining police and court responses with human service approaches to change the behaviour of men who use violence.

¹⁵ Minister for Housing, Hon Candy Broad MLC, Minister for Women's Affairs, Mary Delahunty MP, Attorney General, Hon Rob Hulls MP, Minister for Police and Correctional Services, Hon Tim Holding MP, and Minister for Community Services, Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP.

Priority for initial development work will be given to the new approaches to incident management across the relevant entry points, and new models of service delivery including increased housing options, consistent risk assessment and intensive case management. Referral pathways between support services, police and courts will be strengthened and the capacity to respond to increased police and court referrals for support will increase.

The rollout of the reforms will be phased, to ensure an initial focus on building system capacity and supporting service realignment and improvement. A staged approach also recognises the complexity of the organisational and service practice changes required.

Women, children and men will be provided with an appropriate response to family violence regardless of the first point of contact with the system. Figure 1 illustrates the integrated client support model. The service system comprises an area-based approach with multiple entry points and well-defined and linked services that work towards a common set of objectives. The approach identifies common risk assessment, a set of services for women and children and a set of services for men.



7.1 *New Accommodation Strategy*

Women's refuges will continue to be an important part of the family violence response in Victoria. They provide safe accommodation and support to women and children escaping family violence who have to leave their own accommodation due to the severity of the violence perpetrated against them. However, an expanded choice of housing solutions for women and children will shift the focus from the dominant current secure refuge response, to provide a choice of refuge or outreach support in other accommodation settings:

- in own home
- in other government funded public and community housing properties
- private rental
- short-term motel accommodation.

This is a major redesign of the service system, with total new funding of \$13.3 million over four years being invested in more cost effective options rather than the capital costs associated with establishing and maintaining refuges.

New funding of \$7.3 million over four years will increase the provision of family violence outreach services to women and women with children experiencing family violence. A primary focus of the reforms will be on ensuring that women and children will be supported to remain in or return to their own home wherever possible, or to access accommodation in their community, thereby retaining access to schools and other local community supports and activities.

Additional support and funding of \$1.4 million over four years, combined with some existing funds, will help link women to the private rental market. This program will incorporate the learnings from the private rental brokerage pilot project carried out under the *Victorian Homelessness Strategy* and extend the provision of this accommodation option across the State. An additional \$100,000 over four years will provide increased short term immediate crisis accommodation for women and children combined with an increased outreach support capacity. After the immediate crisis, women and children will then be linked to ongoing outreach support, where required.

Sometimes men return home even when an exclusion order has been granted as they feel they have nowhere else to go. New crisis accommodation and referral responses for men will ensure that more women and children can remain safely in the home. Funding of \$0.5 million over four years has been provided to assist men who, under the terms of an intervention order, are required to remain away from the family home. The funding will allow for short-term accommodation of up to three nights in a hotel, motel or caravan park. This initiative will complement the provision of outreach support to women and children who are remaining in the home under the terms of the interim intervention order with exclusion provisions (sole occupancy order).

7.2 *New Incident Management*

Funding of \$1.4 million over four years will provide for a 24 hour, 7 day a week response through enhanced statewide and local after hours outreach support services. This will enable quick and effective responses to increased family violence incidents and police referrals. A coordinated common risk assessment is imperative in these responses to complement the work of police and outreach services and inform the support approach with a safety plan for the women and children.

Funding of \$200,000 has been provided to develop a new common risk assessment framework that will enable service providers to accurately determine both the current and ongoing danger to women and children caused by family violence. Consistent criteria for determining risk will lead to more accurate assessment of client need, resulting in more accurate and informed referrals, improved evidence gathering and safety planning, and increased service provision and accountability.

Workforce development will also be a key component of success of the integrated family violence service model. Funding of \$500,000 over four years has been provided to implement training and workforce development initiatives to complement the service system.

7.3 *New and Improved Case Management*

All service providers will adopt a consistent approach to case planning and coordination. Case coordination will include the development and implementation of a case plan, the provision of information and practical support (e.g. counselling, offering a range of accommodation options), coordinating existing services, referral to other services, court support, monitoring of service delivery, and review.

New specialist service models will target support to those women and children identified as most at risk. Funding of \$1.8 million over four years for intensive case management will ensure skilled professionals working with clients with complex needs, determining appropriate service needs for each individual (including the need for cultural support), actively seek out services or coordinating existing services, and engaging informal support networks. Intensive case management will assess risk and need; develop an individual service plan; coordinate the overall integrated service response; provide intensive support and work closely with women and families over time to achieve sustainable outcomes. While the new family violence model does not involve any increase in health or child protection services available, intensive case management will maintain continuity if family violence victims are already clients of such services.

7.4 Counselling Support and Recovery Services

The availability and quality of women and children's counselling support and recovery programs will be increased. Funding of \$6.7 million over four years has been provided to extend and enhance the current provision of counselling, recovery and group programs for women and children experiencing family violence.

Access to men's behaviour change programs will be increased through an additional \$4.7 million over four years, to assist men to take responsibility for their behaviour. Perpetrators will also be made more accountable through new justice reforms such as the Police Code of Practice and the specialist family violence response through the Court reforms.

Funding of \$2.4 million over four years has been provided to implement additional Indigenous Healing and Time Out Centres. New centres will be established, beyond the pilots already funded by Government, for Indigenous communities which experience much higher levels of family violence than the rest of the community.

Funding of \$1.3 million over four years will provide an innovative program for young men exhibiting violent behaviour and will seek to address intergenerational violence, a key factor in longer term prevention.

8. Looking to the Future

Family violence cannot be solved overnight and the impact of the integrated model will be monitored. Significant long-term prevention will depend on cultural change within the community alongside stronger service responses. However, these first moves towards an integrated, multi-agency response represent important steps towards reducing the personal, social and economic costs of family violence. The new initiatives will provide better support to victims, and deal more effectively with perpetrators, as well as enhancing the skills of workers and case managers who deal with family violence. Finally, the integrated family violence service response will continue to bring the issue of family violence into the open and ensure all members of the community can confidently speak out when they know there is trouble. In the long term, this will reduce repeat occurrences of family violence for individuals and across generations.

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