

## Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Final Report and Funding Announcements

April 2016

On 30 March 2016, the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down its final report, which included 227 recommendations. The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence was the first of its kind in Australia.

### Contents

Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Final Report .....	1
Royal Commission Final Report Recommendations .....	2
Victoria's Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework Review .....	3
Family Violence Initiatives: Funding Announcements .....	3
Council of Australian Governments .....	4
Further information .....	5

In announcing the establishment of the Royal Commission on 22 February 2015, the Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews committed to implementing all the Royal Commission's recommendations and reconfirmed this commitment with the release of the final report.

The Premier has indicated that family violence is the leading contributor to death and disability for Australian women under 45, with one woman murdered by her current or former partner every week. The Victorian Premier has also highlighted that family violence cost the Victorian economy more than \$3.4 billion a year and constituted 40 per cent of police work.

On 23 March 2016, ahead of the Royal Commission's final report, the Victorian Government allocated an immediate \$10 million in funding to family violence service providers, and a new Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, which will be led by Ms Rosie Batty.

The Commission was appointed to inquire and report into how to effectively:

- prevent family violence;
- improve early intervention;
- support victims;
- make perpetrators accountable;
- better coordinate community and government responses; and
- evaluate and measure strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services.

## Royal Commission Final Report Recommendations

The final report made 277 recommendations, with the Victorian Government committing to implement in full.

Key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence final report include:

- **Support and Safety Hubs:** Support and Safety Hubs to be introduced in each of the 17 Department of Health and Human Services local division areas in Victoria which will serve the purpose of providing intake and initial case coordination until people can be placed with specialised services.

The Department of Health and Human Services local division areas are available [here](#).

- **Central Information Point:** The establishment of a Central Information Point to be led by Victoria Police and will funnel information about perpetrators to the Support and Safety Hubs. In order for this process to be effective, new laws will need to be introduced to ensure that privacy considerations do not undermine the safety of victims.
- **Extra Funding:** An immediate increase in funding to services that support victims and families, including additional resources for culturally sensitive service initiatives to respond to Aboriginal families in crisis and a dedicated funding stream for preventing family violence.
- **Rehousing:** A Family Violence Housing Assistance Implementation Task Force to be established in order to oversee the rehousing of women and children forced to leave their homes, supported by expanded individual funding packages.
- **Police and mobile technology:** Expand investigative capacity for police and mobile technology for front-line police, including a trial of body-worn cameras.
- **Courts:** The establishment of more specialist family violence courts that can deal with criminal, civil and family law matters at the same time, with all family violence cases heard in specialist courts within five years. Currently, the Family Violence Court Division includes the Ballarat Magistrate's Court and the Heidelberg Magistrates' Court, with Specialist Family Violence Services at Melbourne Magistrates' Court, Frankston Magistrates' Court, Sunshine Magistrates' Court, Werribee Magistrates' Court.
- **Perpetrator Programs:** The development of stronger perpetrator programs and increased monitoring and oversight by agencies to assist in improving program design in the long term.
- **Key workforce training:** With training programs in place for certain healthcare workers, it is recommended to extend and enhance family violence training for all key workforces—including in hospitals and schools.
- **Respectful Relationships:** The Victorian Government to mandate the introduction of Respectful Relationships Education in government schools, from Prep to Year 12, which will be a flagship component of the Victorian Government's family violence prevention strategy.

- **Restorative justice for victims of family violence:** The Department of Justice and Regulation, in consultation with victims' representatives and experts in restorative justice, to develop a framework and pilot program for the delivery of restorative justice options for victims of family violence, with victims at the centre.
- **Family Violence Agency:** The establishment of a Family Violence Agency to hold government to account in implementing the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence final report.

### **Victoria's Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework Review**

On 12 April 2016, the Victorian Government announced a review would be conducted into Victoria's Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework, which would be led by Monash University. The framework exists to assist practitioners who work in a range of fields to understand and identify risk factors associated with family violence. Monash University have been appointed to consult with peak bodies, experts in family violence, family violence service providers, frontline users of CRAF and survivors of family violence and also investigate evidence of best practice nationally and internationally. The Government has indicated the review is due to be completed by the end of 2016.

### **Family Violence Initiatives: Funding Announcements**

On 13 April 2016, the Victorian Government announced \$572 million would be allocated over two years in the 2016-17 Victorian Budget, delivering on 65 recommendations of the Royal Commission's final report. The Victorian Government has also announced it will consult with survivors of family violence and service providers to develop a 10-year Victorian Family Violence Plan, which is expected to be delivered later in 2016.

The \$572 million include the following:

- **\$32.5 million** to develop a new system for safeguarding and sharing information between family violence services. The final report recommends measures for improving outdated IT systems to enhance agencies' abilities to share information.
- **\$19 million** for a new type of family violence navigator to assist victims through every step of crisis and recovery, as recommended by the Luke Batty Coronial inquest.
- **\$15.4 million** to establish an independent monitor to hold the Government to account in implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Funds will also be used to plan for a new coordination agency, and to support the Victim Survivors Advisory Council, Family Violence Steering Committee and consultation process as we overhaul the system.
- **\$10.4 million** to build the capacity of the family violence workforce and support other workers how to best identify and respond to family violence. This also includes funding to further develop and embed the Family Violence Index. The Victorian Government has indicated the development of a Family Violence Index would provide guidance for decision makers on how and where to allocate resources relating to family violence. The Victorian Government has commissioned Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to

define what measures, statistics and data should be included in the index.

- **\$5 million** to begin work on rolling out 17 safety and support hubs across the Department of Health and Human Services local divisions.

The Department of Health and Human Services local division areas are available [here](#).

- **\$152.5 million** to go towards housing to shelter family violence victims. Work will commence on building and redeveloping family violence refuges, expanding crisis accommodation, and rapidly funding up to 130 new social housing homes. Innovative options will be introduced to assist victims to be kept in their own home and to access the private rental market.
- **\$122.0 million** towards expanding a new program that gives intensive support for children in their own home and also increasing family services and counselling, and continuing reforms of the child protection system.
- **\$103.9 million** for specialist family violence services such as crisis support and counselling.
- **\$61.6 million** in family violence prevention aimed at where Victorians live, work, play and learn. This includes expanding the Victorian Government's Respectful Relationships program to protect the next generation, introducing Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy, and engaging with local communities to raise awareness to prevent violence.
- **\$25.7 million** to work with Aboriginal communities in addressing family violence, including prevention and early intervention programs, new approaches to dispute resolution, and expanding programs for Aboriginal women.
- **\$23.9 million** to begin reforming the justice system so it protects victims and holds perpetrators to account. This includes expanding legal services for victims, more men's behaviour change programs and developing ways to improve victims' experience at court.

The Victorian Government has committed to spreading the funding across metropolitan, regional and rural communities.

### **Council of Australian Governments**

At the most recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting held on 1 April 2016 - soon after the release of the Royal Commission into Family Violence final report - COAG noted the outcomes of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews indicating that he would provide a detailed briefing of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence final report at the next COAG meeting.

## Further information

It has recently been publicly revealed that Victoria's Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona Richardson is herself a survivor of family violence. In 1974 she moved to Melbourne when her mother fled a family violence situation and stayed at a Women's Refuge in Frankston, which was one of the first in Melbourne.

There are also various existing frameworks in Victoria that address the seriousness of family violence such as the *Family Violence Protection Act*, which provides a comprehensive definition of family violence; the Victorian Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence and the development of the Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families that is overseen by the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence final report is available to view [here](#).

Relevant Media Releases relating to the Royal Commission into Family Violence as per below:

- Premier Announces Royal Commission Into Family Violence, December 2014 available [here](#).
- Government Receives Report Of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, March 2016 available [here](#).
- Urgent Family Violence Investment Will Help Keep Women and Children Safe, April 2016 available [here](#).

The Department of Health and Human Services 17 local division areas are available [here](#).

Hawker Britton's Occasional Paper on the Labor Party's election commitment to the establishment of a Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence is available [here](#).