

2018-2019 Victorian State Budget: Summary and Analysis

14 May 2018

Summary

The 2018-2019 Victorian State Budget sent a strong message on the current Labor Government's commitment to investment in skills development, infrastructure, and services, in particular education and health. While family violence did not receive the headline levels of new funding as seen in the 2017-2018 Budget, No to Violence welcomed the announcement of investment to build the workforce required to enable and support the Royal Commission reforms. As some initiatives earmarked under the \$1.9 billion investment come to an end, No to Violence recommends a clear and continued focus on expanding and diversifying the range of interventions offered through the men's specialist family violence sector.

Funding for industry and workforce development

10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response

In addition to the \$22.8 million allocated in the 2017-2018 State Budget to support a whole of government approach to workforce and industry planning, \$5 million was allocated to implement initiatives under the Industry Plan.

Aboriginal 10-Year Family Violence Plan

A further \$9.1 million has been allocated for 2018-2019 (and \$13.5 over four years) to support the Aboriginal workforce and family violence prevention and response sector. This builds on last year's Budget that supported the development of the new 10-Year Plan and investment of \$10 million to support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to prevent and respond to family violence.

Responding to Victorian job growth with more training

Funding will be made available for additional training to develop skilled workforces in government priority areas. The \$303.8 million invested over 2 years (\$180.9 million for 2018) will include supporting workforce growth in the areas of family violence, NDIS and infrastructure. Decisions regarding the allocation of funds will be made by the Industry Taskforce.

Child information sharing reforms

Similar to the Family Violence Information Sharing reforms funded through the 2017-2018 State Budget, this year's investment targets the second major information sharing legislative change in Victoria. The total investment is \$43.4 million over four years and will support prescribed entities to appropriately share information. While this investment is significantly more than the \$11.6 million provided to support the implementation of the FV Information Sharing regime, Child Information Sharing will require a much broader rollout across the sectors intersecting with the wellbeing and safety of children.

Funding for service delivery

Family violence therapeutic and flexible support

The State Budget invests a further \$49.8 million over 4 years, with \$22.6 million allocated in 2018-2019, to provide approximately 6500 flexible support packages each year for two years, increase

access to services and therapeutic interventions to address adolescent family violence and establish the Wyndham Multidisciplinary Centre due to open from mid-2018. The new MDC in the Western Metropolitan Region will provide a range of specialist and coordinated services for victim survivors of sexual assault and family violence.

Elder abuse family counselling and mediation service

\$6 million over 4 years has been invested to continue to trial an integrated model of care to respond to suspected elder abuse. This will offer specialist clinical advice, family counselling and mediation services from five locations across Victoria.

After-hours refuge responses for victims of family violence

Up to 12 family violence refuges will receive \$27.7 million over four years to continue to provide secure, after-hours crisis accommodation for women and children seeking immediate support.

Increase family violence crisis properties

\$1.3 million has been invested for the 2018-2019 financial year to provide for additional family violence properties in the Wimmera South Mallee area.

Funding for prevention initiatives

Improving gender equality in Victorian Communities

\$9.6 million over four years, \$3.3 million in 2018-2019, has been allocated to support the implementation of the gender equality strategy, *Safe and Strong*. These funds will also be invested to restore and maintain the Queen Victoria Women's Centre.

Preventing family violence in Victoria

Behavioural change campaigns will continue to receive funding to support initiatives under state plan, *Free from violence*. The \$24 million over 4 years, \$6 million each year, will target initiatives in workplaces, diverse communities, adolescents, adults and older people. These funds are in addition to the \$38.8 million over four years invested in the 2017-2018 State Budget to implement the state plan and trial new strategies.

Respectful relationships for children and youth

The Respectful Relationships Education in Schools initiative will receive continued funding for the next two years to support schools and early childhood educators to promote respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. The 2018-2019 State Budget investment amounts to \$22.9 million. This is a slight increase from the \$21.9 million allocated in the 2016-2017 Budget, which does account for inflation.

Funding for courts

Additional court capacity

\$126.9 million over four years, \$18.5 million in 2018-2019, will be provided to increase resources in the Victorian court system to implement criminal justice reforms. Initiatives include an additional three magistrates to establish a new Bail and Remand Court in the Magistrates' Court in line with recommendations of the Coghlan Bail Review. This review called for increased scrutiny in determining Bail and conditions for family violence matters, requiring an assessment of risk be held as central to decision-making.

Future investment in family violence and the men's specialist sector

Following on from last year's unprecedented investment of \$1.9 billion to support the statewide family violence system reforms, No to Violence considered it unlikely to see further large funding boosts to the sector this financial year. The majority of the \$1.9 billion investment made in the 2017-2018 Budget was allocated across a four year period. For some initiatives these funds increase over time to support the necessary expansion of service delivery (e.g. Support and Safety Hubs, specialist family violence integrated court response), while others peak and decrease over the four years in response to the projected completion dates of specific tasks, for example those of large scale workforce capacity building in mainstream sectors and upgrading crisis accommodation. Although the majority of initiatives have been allocated funds across the initial four year period of family violence reforms, some key areas require further investment in 2019 and then into the long-term to see real change to the family violence system.

Two key reform areas have not had any allocation of funds from 2019 onwards, namely is the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (allocated \$26.0 and \$24.3 million in 2017 and 2018 respectively) and the Risk Assessment and Risk Management initiative (allocated \$15 million in both 2017 and 2018). Considering the wide-scale rollout of these two reforms, NTV expects and will call upon the State Government to ensure these initiatives continue to receive the appropriate funds to support the rollout, uptake, alignment and compliance across the system to these major reforms.

While \$49.5 million was invested in 2017-2018 through the Department of Health and Human Services for perpetrator programs, the majority (\$45.4 million) of these funds were allocated to the 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial years. This leaves only \$4.1 million for the next two years. Before the end of the 2018-2019 financial year, NTV expects to see early evaluation findings from both the investment in men's case management and the trial of innovative interventions as well as final advice from the Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions. NTV expects and will call upon the State Government to provide further funding to at least the levels seen in the 2017-2019 period to fund tailored and responsive interventions for perpetrators that match the various risk levels, presentations and needs of the target group.

Justice-based perpetrator intervention funding similarly expires at the end of the 2018-2019 financial year. \$7.9 million was invested across two years (\$3.4 and \$4.5 million in 2017 and 2018 respectively) to develop and trial measures targeted at improving the management of specific cohorts of perpetrators, introduce applicant and respondent workers to respond to the needs of the LGBTI community and adolescents who use violence against family members, as well as introducing capacity to conduct family violence specific assessment and referrals from the criminal and civil jurisdiction of the Magistrates' Court. The court mandated counselling orders programs was also to be expanded to include capacity to refer to gambling support services. NTV expects that findings from the current review of the Counselling Order program through Magistrates' Court Victoria and evaluation of trial interventions will have significant influence on the budget allocation for 2019. NTV will continue to work with MCV and the Department of Justice and Regulation to advocate for timely and responsive interventions and lobby the State Government for investment in 2019.

Appendix: NTV Media Release

Victorian Labor State Government reinforce investment to end family violence

On 1 May 2018, the Victorian Labor State Government reinforced its investment in the 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response, \$5m over the course of one year.

The Victorian State Budget 2018/19 also paves the way for strengthening the skills required to work safely with men who cause fear and harm in homes across the state.

Additionally, this Budget has invested \$300m into job growth with more training in key priority areas. For over 20 years, No to Violence has been developing the qualifications and professional development enabling practitioners to attain professional skill sets and work with men in such a way that women and children are kept safe.

The CEO from No to Violence, Australia's largest peak body representing organisations and practitioners who work with men to shift their thinking and change behaviour, says:

"We are committed to working with the Victorian Government to build the skills of men's specialist family violence practitioners, and grow our workforce to meet overwhelming demand." – Jacqui Watt CEO No to Violence

As many family violence practitioners will attest, we're not even close to seeing the end of family violence in Victoria, or Australia more broadly. During 2017, one woman died every week at the hands of a current or former partner (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). This is unacceptable, and further highlights why the Victorian Government must keep family violence in view.

Jacqui Watt continues:

"Last year the Victorian Labor State Government invested a remarkable amount of money, \$1.9 billion over four years, to address the problem of family violence in Victoria. Australia has never seen this level of response, action and commitment from a state government. However, we can't pretend that family violence is now somehow 'fixed' or disappearing from homes in our communities."

Building on last year's record funding announcement, the 2018/19 State Budget further invests to address family violence over the next four years with a focus on therapeutic and crisis support to victims, \$77.5m; implementing the *Free from Violence* prevention strategy, \$24m; and the Aboriginal 10-Year Family Violence Plan, \$13.5m.

Other quotes attributable to Jacqui Watt:

"Today we would have been buoyed to see a greater financial commitment to the prevention of violence against women, and an ongoing commitment to ensuring family violence is kept in view well into the future.

After today, we're heading into election mode, and with a lack of bi-partisan support and investment into the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations, it does paint a picture of uncertainty.

Fundamentally, we must continue to work with men who use family violence differently otherwise we will continue to see women and children murdered, suffering permanent injury and illness, all as a result of men's use of family violence."

For Victorian State Budget updates, follow No to Violence on Twitter, @NTVorg and Facebook, No to Violence.

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Further interview and photo opportunities also possible on request.