

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

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A NEW APPROACH TO REDUCE FAMILY VIOLENCE

Women escaping family violence will get access to 24-hour support and violent men may be housed away from the family home in a new approach to family violence services.

Housing Minister Candy Broad and Minister for Women's Affairs Minister Mary Delahunty said the package of initiatives, worth **\$35.1 million**, would result in improved safety for women and children, greater consistency in the response to reports of family violence and greater accountability for perpetrators.

"Family violence affects all communities and is a profound cause of entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage," they said.

"The new approach means a faster response to incidents, support and referral around the clock, and new emergency and longer term accommodation options for women and children."

The Ministers said the 2005-06 State Budget would deliver \$35.1 million over four years to provide a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week support and referral service, create a wider range of housing options beyond staying at home or moving to a refuge, and improve the justice system.

Ms Broad said safety and stability was critical for families to be successful in all areas of life including school and work.

"More choice for women and short-term accommodation options for men will reduce disruption to children and help stabilise families."

Ms Delahunty said a report by Access Economics in 2004 put the cost of

domestic violence at \$8 billion a year nationally and \$2 billion in Victoria. “This cost is not just the impact of pain, suffering and premature death, but the reduction in living standards, the cost of lost productivity, health system costs and second generational costs associated with children witnessing domestic violence,” she said.

“Family violence affects one in five women and is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44. It is also a major concern that 36 per cent of police visits are to the same houses and families, demonstrating high levels of re-offending.

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

“The outcome of these changes will be stronger support for women and their families. These reforms will reduce death and injury and help break the cycle of violence,” Ms Delahunty said.

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She said men could currently argue that they had nowhere to go following a domestic incident, forcing women and children to leave, or stay in a dangerous situation.

“Women and children can receive crisis accommodation in refuges when it is available, but it is short-term and often a long way from their support networks and children’s schools,” she said.

Ms Broad said the \$35.1 million package would deliver:

- \$3.5 million** for a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week response through statewide and local after-hours services, and more consistent responses to reports through the introduction of uniform risk assessment criteria, training for professionals, and monitoring the implementation of the reforms;
- \$7.3 million** for case management services to handle the increased reporting of incidents with another **\$1.8 million** for intensive case management of the most complex cases;
- \$1.3 million** to establish an innovative program for young men exhibiting violent behaviour, which will seek to address inter-generational violence - a key factor in long-term prevention;
- \$11.5 million** to break the cycle of violence through increased counselling services, including information and support for women reporting family violence and linking them to a support worker, and introducing men's behaviour change programs to help prevent the re-occurrence of violent and abusive behaviour;
- \$5.3 million** for new and strengthened justice system responses including more police prosecutors, training for court staff and magistrates, and new

family violence specialist services for victims at three Magistrates' Courts;

- \$600,000** for new crisis accommodation and referral services for men, which could include motel vouchers for men for one to three days, so that women and children can remain safely in the family home;
- \$1.4 million** to expand choices for emergency accommodation to include short-term motel accommodation for women, as well as government and community housing, assistance in getting private rental housing and secure refuge; and
- \$2.4 million** over four years to establish a fourth Indigenous Healing service and four Time Out services for Indigenous communities experiencing family violence.