

A Victoria Free from Violence

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

- **Family violence response**
\$36.9 million in 2026-27 (\$74.4 million over 2 years) to continue safe and secure accommodation for victim survivors and their families, including:
 - operation of core and cluster refuges and short-term supported crisis accommodation
 - continuation and statewide expansion of the Personal Safety Initiative responses and security upgrades to support victim survivors to remain safely in their own homes
 - specialist supports including case management for victim survivors
 - therapeutic interventions for children and young people
 - emergency crisis support packages and flexible support packages for victim survivors
- **Central Information Point**
\$11.5 million in 2026-27 (\$23.2 million over 2 years) to continue the statewide Central Information Point, a multi-agency service that collates and shares relevant information about the risk of harm posed by perpetrators of family violence, to inform risk assessment and management across services, police, courts and child protection.
- **Responding to sexual violence**
\$1.1 million in 2026-27 (\$2.2 million over 2 years) to continue investment in Sexual Assault Services Victoria, maintaining sector leadership, coordination and workforce development for the specialist sexual assault sector.

WHAT'S GOOD

- An important positive outcome is the continuation and statewide expansion of the Personal Safety Initiative (PSI). The PSI enables victim survivors to remain safely in their own homes rather than forcing them to flee and lose their housing, community connections and stability. VCOSS called for the maintenance of PSI coordinator positions and statewide coordination and is pleased the budget goes further with a statewide expansion.
- The continuation of Sexual Assault Services Victoria's sector leadership, coordination and workforce development function is welcome. Sexual Assault Services Victoria plays a critical convening role in a sector that is under significant strain. Retaining this infrastructure supports

the specialist sexual assault sector to maintain quality and consistency of practice, as it faces growing and unmet demand.

- While the Budget does not deliver the quantum of investment called for, it provides two years of continuity for services that many Victorians depend on at some of the most difficult moments of their lives. These are the services that receive calls from women fleeing violence in the middle of the night and that keep children safe. Maintaining this architecture, in the context of significant lapsing funding, prevents a devastating service cliff. VCOSS acknowledges this as a minimum floor, while noting that it falls short of what the sector needs.

WHAT'S MISSING

- VCOSS's pre-budget submission called for the continuation of \$96 million in lapsing family violence funding, at a minimum of \$48 million per year, indexed and ongoing. This was not fulfilled, and services continue to face uncertainty associated with insufficient, short-term funding arrangements. These funding settings make it difficult to plan and sustain the workforce, retain experienced practitioners and provide consistent, high-quality support to victim survivors.
- Victoria's refuge system currently provides 198 household places, a figure that has not changed for several years despite population growth and rising family violence reporting. VCOSS called for a doubling of refuge capacity to 396 households per night to better meet current demand. No additional refuge places were announced in this Budget, meaning many women and children in need of safety will continue to rely on temporary or inadequate options, including motels or informal arrangements or without access to safe accommodation.
- The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework is Victoria's flagship mechanism for coordinating risk across agencies. Workforce development funding has been cut from its original level, undermining practitioners' capacity to use the framework as intended. This Budget did not restore that funding, or provide investment for the rollout of the Children and Young Person MARAM framework. Without adequate workforce development, the MARAM cannot deliver the coordinated, informed responses to risk that victim survivors need.
- Dedicated resourcing was not provided for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to scale proven culturally safe, self-determined approaches to family violence prevention and response programs, consistent with the Yoorrook Justice Commission's recommendations and Victoria's commitments under Closing the Gap Target 13. This requires continued investment given the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal women and children.
- There is an absence of investment in responses to people who use violence. VCOSS called for a doubling of Men's Behaviour Change program places from 4,400 to 8,800 for the next two years, boosting Family Safety Contact work, a dedicated strategy focused on people using violence, and a cross-departmental fund to ensure appropriate interventions are available. Without sustained investment in behaviour change, the burden of safety falls entirely on victim survivors and the services supporting them. No dedicated investment was announced for responses to children and young people using violence, including adolescent violence in the home. This remains a growing

area of need across multiple contexts. Early intervention programs are important to support better long-term outcomes for young people and victim survivors, including targeted supports for young people without a protective parent or carer.

- The sexual violence sector continues to face significant capacity pressures. The \$1.1 million for Sexual Assault Services Victoria's sector leadership is welcome, but further investment in direct service capacity and system integration is needed to meet growing demand. There are also opportunities to strengthen system integration and data capability to support more effective, trauma-informed responses.
- There remains a need for sustained investment in community-led prevention initiatives for LGBTQIA+ Victorians, culturally and racially marginalised communities and women with disability. Family violence in these communities is often less visible and underreported, and victim survivors can face significant barriers to accessing appropriate and inclusive support.
- Elder abuse did not receive specific attention in this Budget. Although broader legal assistance measures may offer some support, there remains scope for more targeted prevention and early intervention, including through prevention initiatives and community-based networks.