

Media Release



Vic Budget falls well short on family violence

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Today's Victorian State Budget represents a missed opportunity by the Victorian Government to commit vital justice investment to help the increasing number of women and children reporting family violence, according to State community legal peak, the Federation of Community Legal Centres.

"The Budget allocates a small but welcome investment to support better family violence risk assessment (CRAF, \$3m), and new if clearly inadequate funding to coordinate multi-agency approaches to high-risk cases (RAMPs, \$4.5m). Overall, however, it falls well short of what's needed to prevent and address family violence in Victoria," said Federation Senior Policy Adviser, Dr Chris Atmore.

"Missing from this Budget is urgently needed funding to ensure safety and security at all courts dealing with family violence, and for women leaving court – a potentially fatal risk, as we have recently seen with the tragic death of Fiona Warzywoda.

"There is also no funding for providing and coordinating integrated services across courts, including adequate referral to men's behaviour change programs that can significantly reduce the risk to women and children.

"Failure to properly fund these vital preventive services is compounded by the Victorian Government's failure to allocate sustained and adequate funding to the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths. The review plays a critical role in understanding and addressing the factors leading to family violence fatalities so they can be prevented in future," Dr Atmore said.

Women escaping family violence also need help to navigate the legal system that has not been recognised in this Budget.

"Underfunding has led to reduced access to grants of legal aid affecting many women who now have to represent themselves in family law matters against violent ex-partners. Despite this, the Budget includes no new funding for legal aid or community legal centres," Dr Atmore said.

"It's time we had real action on family violence. What we're trying desperately to prevent are the assaults and too often the murders of women and children," Dr Atmore concluded.

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