

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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CHANGING LAWS AND CULTURE TO SAVE WOMEN'S LIVES

Victoria is leading the nation in the prevention of family violence.

We've implemented all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission – and dedicated more money and effort than any other Australian government, ever.

These reforms include opening 36 Orange Doors, providing immediate and simple access for women escaping violence and establishing the nation's first dedicated prevention agency, Respect Victoria.

The Allan Labor Government is building on this ambitious agenda: because we know the safety of women and girls is counting on it.

Announced today, a new package of reforms will change laws, change culture and deliver new support for victim survivors when they need it most.

The package will drive action at every stage: better responding to victims when violence occurs, delivering a stronger justice response that holds offenders to account, and continuing Victoria's world-leading prevention response – stopping violence before it starts.

Changing our Laws

The Labor Government will implement changes to ensure Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIOs) keep victim survivors safe for as long as they need – and avoid the retraumatising steps of reappearing in court.

Currently, most FVIOs are between six and 12 months long. Victims can be required to return to court – retraumatising them in the process. It's not good enough.

That's why the Government will introduce a presumption of a new minimum length for FVIOs – providing enduring protection for victim survivors. It'll put the focus on perpetrators and their behaviour – instead of requiring victims to prove they're not safe, again and again.

We'll also make changes to the service of FVIOs, so that protection can start sooner and putting a stop to perpetrators who deliberately avoid being served.

The Government will work with Victoria Police and the courts on a proposal to give police the power to issue longer family violence safety notices.

We'll also change the stalking offence as informed by the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Stalking Report and we will deliver improvements to Personal Safety Intervention Orders – with legislative changes to be introduced into the Parliament in 2025.

We'll seek advice from the Judicial College and Sentencing Advisory Council regarding guidance for magistrates on sentencing for breaches of FVIOs – to ensure they are responding to community expectations.

Changing our culture

Building on the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Government will deliver new action to stop violence before it starts.

Media contact: Lily King 0499 791 387 | lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Our Respectful Relationships curriculum is delivering age-appropriate lessons to students in all Victorian government schools and many non-government schools, promoting respect and healthy relationships early.

We'll build on that success – with more intensive training and support for staff across 1,199 schools – and we'll invite all remaining non-government schools to join, supported by startup funding and professional learning.

We'll counter the influence of Andrew Tate types by making sure more boys and young men have the right role models to build positive behaviours, expanding the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program.

Already being piloted in 100 schools, the program will be rolled out to 240 more – delivering intensive training to help 'MoRE Champions' establish a culture of healthy masculinity, as part of Respectful Relationships.

New learning resources will also be developed to help schools teach kids how to safely navigate online, providing age-appropriate lesson plans on toxic masculinity, hate speech, pornography and coercive control. We'll help parents and carers too – delivering more advice and resources from trusted sources.

Mandatory training will also be added to Victoria's RSA training requirements, teaching staff how to identify and prevent sexual assault and harassment in venues.

Respect Victoria will also launch a new advertising education campaign later this year, aimed at promoting healthy attitudes among boys and young men, including a strong focus on social media.

Immediate response

The best way to keep victim survivors safe is to keep perpetrators in view – so we'll strengthen perpetrator accountability with a boost in case management, and more follow-ups after behaviour change programs to make sure men who complete these programs are not lost to the system.

Building on our existing efforts to keep women safe in their homes, we're also supporting a 'Safe at Home' pilot by McAuley Community Services for Women, providing rapid safety planning and wrap around support to help women who are at-risk of becoming homeless due to family violence.

A boost to the Personal Safety Initiative will support more victim survivors with measures such as home alarms, security assessments, external lighting, locks, fencing upgrades, security screens and personal duress alarms.

Where women can't stay safely in the home, we'll work with the community housing sector to draw funding under the Commonwealth's \$1 billion National Housing Infrastructure Facility, for crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children fleeing family violence – including more core and cluster models.

We'll also improve and upgrade the Central Information Point – an Australian-first that consolidates information about a perpetrator of family violence into a single report – making the system easier and faster to use, so our hardworking family violence workers can get the information they need sooner.

This package will deliver a new Justice Navigator pilot to make sure survivors of sexual assault can easily navigate support, recovery and justice options.

It will also deliver increased therapeutic support for children and young people to help with healing and recovery, alongside a boost in targeted legal services for victim survivors from communities who face additional barriers, like multicultural and First Nations families.

Today's announcement builds on our reforms while accelerating our efforts to drive down violence. The third Rolling Action Plan under *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10-Year Plan for Change* will be released later in 2024.

A Ministerial Action Working Group will continue to examine how we can further keep women and children safe. The Government will also continue to work through National Cabinet to deliver nationwide change.

Recognising the hurt in the community, we'll also have something significant to announce for Ballarat soon.

Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"When women are still dying at the hands of men – we must do more. From prevention to response to justice, these reforms will target family violence at every stage."

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Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

“By adopting these changes, we’re holding perpetrators to account and ensuring we have a justice system that responds to the needs of victims and meets community expectations.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Prevention of Family Violence Vicki Ward

“This package means hitting fast-forward on the action we need now, as well as sowing the seeds on the long-term cultural shift we need to end violence for good.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins

“Women have the right to feel safe and secure as they move around the community and this package is an important step in delivering that safety right across Victoria.”