# 2020/21 Victorian State Budget Summary

On 24 November 2020, the Victorian State Budget 2020-21 was released with a strong focus on people and communities, setting Victoria on the road to recovery post-COVID-19. Delivering on its promise to “keeping women and children safe”, the state allocates $238 million to support victim-survivors of family violence and their families with a specific focus on multiagency information sharing and perpetrator accountability programs. Some of the new funding initiatives in the budget include investment in the social housing infrastructure and training for the sector.

Apart from the direct investment in family violence prevention and response measures, this budget acknowledges the role of pandemic in exacerbating the economic inequality experienced by women. Including women and vulnerable Victorians in the economic recovery initiatives, an investment of $300 million was announced for creating jobs for women and providing access to subsidised and free TAFE training to reskill and find new employment opportunities. The new budget’s focus on job creation and women’s inclusion in economic recovery will assist in addressing the potential long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, including the risk of financial insecurity and abuse.

Notwithstanding a boost in investment for Aboriginal communities and organisations this year (more than $357 million), overall, the budget funding falls short of meeting the needs of the Victorian Aboriginal community. Likewise, LGBTIQ+ communities remain in the background in the state budget with an investment of only $3 million for the LGBTIQ+ organisations and the Community Grants program.

DV Vic has prepared this brief summary of the budget measures that are relevant to the specialist family violence service sector, the broader community services sector that intersects with family violence, and to the critical work of progressing gender equality.

## Family Violence Sector-Specific Funding

### Information Sharing and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Reforms – $2.7 million

Funding is provided to support ongoing work to develop and deliver workforce specific information sharing training through the multi-agency risk assessment and management framework (MARAM) and information sharing schemes. The scope of training will be extended to include information sharing and the multi-agency risk assessment and management framework into business-as-usual practices of all workforces prescribed under relevant legislation that deal with victim survivors and perpetrators, including schools, community mental health and housing services, public health services, state-funded aged care services, and refugee and migrant services.

### Central Information Point – $1.5 million

The 2017-18 Budget allocated funds to establish the Central Information Point (CIP) to provide information to family safety practitioners in the Orange Door support and safety hubs to assess and manage the risk to the safety of family violence victim survivors. The new budget provides funding to continue the operation of the state-wide CIP and to finalise planned system developments.

### Perpetrator Accountability – $10.7 million

Funding is provided to strengthen the system of accountability for perpetrators of family violence through continuation of Caring Dads perpetrator intervention program, and the provision of case management brokerage to support perpetrators to leave home for a time and keep victim survivors safe.

### Therapeutic Interventions – $87.3 million

$87.3 million investment over four years for therapeutic and flexible support for children, young people and adults impacted by family violence. This includes providing 5 700 family violence flexible support packages for victim survivors of family violence each year and continuing adolescent family violence services for young people and their families.

### Family Violence Refuge Responses – $18 million

Funding for case management and other operational costs associated with two new Aboriginal-managed and 13 redeveloped core and cluster refuges due for completion in 2020-21.

### Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities – $9.7 million

$9.7 million allocated for capacity building in multicultural and faith-based organisations to design and deliver family violence prevention outreach and early intervention activities. This funding specifically targets people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### Specialist Family Violence Integrated Court Response – $1.9 million

This investment aims to expand the family violence remote hearing service pilot to 10 locations across Victoria, which will enable victim survivors to provide testimony remotely and safely. This funding will include continued sponsorship of the LGBTIQ+ Practitioner Program, to ensure culturally appropriate services are available for LGBTIQ+ victim survivors and perpetrators.

### Family Violence Reform Oversight – $1.6 million

Extension of funding for the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor for monitoring and reporting on the progress of implementing recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

### Sexual Assault and Family Violence Workforce – $8.1 million

The government has announced $8.1 million to build the sexual assault and family violence workforce, supporting coordination of up to 240 traineeships across the state to increase support for victims of family violence and sexual assault.

### Respectful Relationships for Children and Youth – $38 million

$38 million promised to continue the Respectful Relationships program in schools and early childhood centres to promote respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. As a central component of the Victorian curriculum, the program offers training and resources to schools to introduce respectful relationship education. It also includes professional development for early childhood educators to support respectful relationships in early childhood settings.

## Broader Sector Funding

### Housing Assistance

### a. Big Housing Build – $3.92 billion

Funding is provided to deliver over 12000 new homes throughout Victoria. This includes 9300 new social housing properties replacing 1100 old ones. Funding will also develop 2900 affordable housing for moderate to low-income households. This project will provide accommodation for some of the most vulnerable Victorians.

### b. From Homelessness to a Home – $150.8 million

This investment aims to extend emergency hotel accommodation for up to 2000 Victorians and provide enhanced private rental assistance and flexible support to the people experiencing homelessness to help transition from homelessness and emergency hotel accommodation into stable housing in the long run.

### Employment Support

### a. Pathways to Employment in Growth Sectors - $16.6 million

This funding is provided for additional job training opportunities to support students and job seekers considering pursuing a career in community services. The package includes funding for: the financial support for undergraduates completing child protection studies, carer relief and support to assist unpaid carers pursuing a career in community services, disability and aged care sectors, and the establishment of a new family violence graduate program to create a structured pathway for young people to transition into specialist family violence positions in the sector.

### b. Working for Victoria Initiative - $ 87.5million (in addition to $500 million investment in 2019-20)

This initiative ensures that Victorian job seekers, including people who lost their jobs during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, have been able to find employment in roles that support the community. Working for Victoria provided funding for numerous community organisations in Victoria including Specialist Family Violence Services, boosting their frontline efforts and supporting new jobs in the sector.

### c. Jobs for Victoria: Our Plan to Maximise Jobs and Help Victorians into Work - $619.4 million

Through this initiative, the plan is to maximise jobs and help Victorians into work. Businesses will be supported to create jobs through wage subsidies, with $150 million of subsidies for women, including $50 million for older women.

### d. Skills for Women, Young people, Migrants, Vulnerable Victorians and Retrenched Workers - $155 million

This funding provides additional flexibility for Victorians affected by economic disruption, including women, young people, migrants, vulnerable communities and retrenched workers, to access subsidised and Free TAFE training to reskill and find work. Support is also provided for Koorie learners through additional funding to support pre-accredited learners and additional support for the Koorie Vocational and Education Training Advisory Group. Multicultural Learning Partnership will be established between the Department of Education and Training, AMES Australia, Victorian Multicultural Commission and Adult, Community and Further Education Board to support the learning needs of multicultural communities.

### Addressing Social Connections Across Generations and Ensuring the Response to Elder Abuse – $6.7 million

Apart from supporting the clinical response to elder abuse, this initiative will also renew the Community Activation and Social Isolation program and continue other coronavirus (COVID-19) response initiatives that reduce isolation to continue providing support to vulnerable Victorians.

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Social Services Response – $241.3 million

This includes funding to support vulnerable children and families and a family violence system response to meet increased demand during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Additional funding is also provided to support people experiencing homelessness, people with disability, foster and kinship carers, volunteers, food relief and young people as well as people experiencing significant hardship.

### Gender Equality Programs - $16.9 million

Funding is provided to continue to promote gender equality in Victoria through implementation of Victoria’s Gender Equality Strategy. Core funding is provided to the Office for Women to continue to implement key gender equality reforms. This funding will also support the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre and tenant organisations to undertake critical work to support the health, wellbeing and social inclusion of women, including victims of family violence and single mothers.

### Intensive Family Preservation and Reunification Response – $335.3 million

Funding is provided to help support earlier intervention in the children and families system to improve outcomes for Victorian children and reduce entries into out of home care. The package includes continuation of funding for Integrated Family Services, Cradle to Kinder, Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder and other evidence-based programs in 2020-21.

### Maintaining the Capacity of the Children and Families System – $365.4 million

Investment for expanding the child protection workforce and increasing the number of home-based care placements for vulnerable children who are unable to live safely with their families. Funding is also provided for a range of supports including Child FIRST services to ensure vulnerable families are connected to the relevant services and support they require. There is also assistance available to ensure the sustainability of community service organisations at risk of financial stress.

With the pandemic adding to the existing issues and complexities of addressing all forms of violence against women, this year’s budget has demonstrated promising signs that women are being prioritised at the state level. With an increasing demand and continuous need for providing specialist services to victim survivors, it is essential that long term, secure funding is available for our sector, sustained over the years. There is a pressing need to invest more in the gender-based violence prevention initiatives. We look forward to engaging with the Victorian Government to ensure that sustainable funding is provided for our sector, in order to prevent violence from happening in the first place, to respond to the needs of victim survivors, as well as to provide stability to its workforce.

For further details about the Victorian Budget 2020-21, visit:

<https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/budget-papers>