



The Greens will not turn a blind eye to family violence. We will develop a new comprehensive Victorian Family Violence Action Plan and back the plan with \$100 million in new funding per year for more support services and measures to keep women and children safe.

One in three women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime. In Victoria, family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women aged 15 to 44 years.

The tragic and very public recent deaths of Rosie Batty's son Luke and of Fiona Warzywoda have finally brought deserved attention to this ongoing and grave issue.

Over the past decade reports of family violence have more than doubled in Victoria, with police responding to over 65,000 family violence incidents and 29 female, 8 children and 7 male family violence related deaths last year alone. Police and family violence services are overwhelmed by the demand.

In the face of this terrible violence and the growing numbers of women seeking help, the Coalition Government's response has been totally inadequate, with measly funding and few reforms to address the issue. We can do so much more to make woman and children safe. The time for piecemeal funding and marginalisation of family violence issues is well and truly over.

Tackling family violence is a Greens' priority. To do it we will develop a new Family Violence Action Plan for Victoria, in consultation with the community and experts in the field.

The Action Plan will invest \$100 million per year in new funding to:

- strengthen prevention of family violence;

- increase crisis support and housing services for women and children experiencing family violence;
- make a safe and supportive justice system;
- increase the accountability of men for their violence; and
- prioritise addressing family violence within government.

NO MORE DEATHS

Leading family violence agencies have joined together to create a No More Deaths 25 point plan to keep women and children safe from family violence. These organisations are the experts. They deal with women and children fleeing violent men day in, day out. The Greens support the No More Deaths agenda.

The current Victorian Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children expires in 2015. While this plan has some good intentions, it lacked the sophistication, detail and the financial investment to deliver.

The Greens will work with family violence agencies to develop a new and effective Victorian Family Violence Action Plan. This plan will focus on primary prevention and the 25 priority areas identified by community experts. This plan will receive an additional \$100m annually to carry out priority actions.

PRIORITISING FAMILY VIOLENCE IN GOVERNMENT

The Coalition Government has had its priorities all wrong. It claims to be a law and order government, yet it has given only

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peripheral attention to the murders of tens of women and children behind closed doors every year.

Family violence is the most pressing justice issue of our time – and the Greens will treat it as such.

The Greens believe tackling family violence must be front and centre in government priorities, and addressed through a whole-of-government approach. We support the relocation of the Office of Women's Affairs to within the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

While the Greens support Labor's commitment to a Royal Commission into Family Violence, we believe is no substitute for comprehensive action now. The Greens have a well-funded whole-of-government strategy and we will resolutely pursue it.

FUNDING SUPPORT SERVICES

Crisis support services, counselling and housing services are critical to help women escape violence and re-build their life. Victims of family violence can become disconnected from employment and their social and community networks, so they desperately need support from community agencies.

Funding for family violence support services has been woefully inadequate. Agencies simply can't keep up with demand. For example, Women's Health West is the major provider of family violence support services in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Demand for their family violence services increased by 286% over the four years to July 2014, yet they only received 25% more funding.

Further, some local areas most in need have no full-time family services at all. For example, Hume has a rate of 1184.3 family violence incidents per 100,000 people, well above the Victorian average rate of 732.1 per 100,000. Yet there are only very limited support services in this area. The nearest crisis response services are located in inner city, which may be up to an hour drive away at peak times.

Men's behaviour change programs are also struggling to cope with the demand, but are vital to help prevent offending and re-offending. Agencies are currently funded to provide services to roughly 20% of the men in need of intervention.

In a desperate effort to stem public backlash, the Government did finally announce some money for addressing family violence in the 2014-15 budget. But really, it is too little, too late to convince us of their commitment to this issue.

The Greens funding package will boost the capacity of local support services to respond to women and children in crisis, and to provide ongoing advocacy and counselling to meet their health, housing and other needs. It will increase provision of services in areas where there are shortages and provide specific services for women with disabilities, from diverse cultural backgrounds and Aboriginal women. It will also extend community correction orders and funding for men's behaviour change programs.

HOUSING WOMEN AND CHILDREN

In Victoria, women escaping family violence make up to 40% of people seeking specialist homeless services. It is the single largest reason given for seeking homelessness support in this state.

Funding for housing services for women escaping violence was provided through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. But the Abbott government has failed to commit to extend this partnership beyond 2015, and announced no ongoing funding for the National Rental Affordability Scheme. Therefore women fleeing family violence, who need affordable housing alternatives, face an uncertain future.

More needs to be done to help women remain safe at home. The Greens will prioritise provision of Safe at Home programs across Victoria so women and children can stay at home, when it is safe to do so, while violent perpetrators are removed. The Greens will also boost funding to public housing. This will benefit the 34,000 people on the waiting list, including many women escaping violence. See the Greens Housing Policy for more information.

IMPROVING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Over the last 10 years, the number of family violence intervention orders finalised has more than doubled. Women

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can be at risk when they are taking out intervention orders or appearing in court as a victim of family violence.

Providing safe waiting spaces, access to specialist family violence support workers, and court staff and magistrates who understand the dynamics of family violence, would be of great benefit. Yet today only 5 of 53 magistrates' courts have victim support workers and only 1 court has a safe waiting space.

Women also need free legal advice. Legal services that help victims of family violence seek intervention orders and assist them to respond appropriately are struggling with the increased demand, but the Napthine Government has failed to sufficiently increase funding. The Abbott Government has made this situation worse by announcing \$43 million in cuts to Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, the Community Legal Service Program, Legal Aid Commissions, and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services across Australia over the coming years.

Through greater investment, the Greens will improve the safety and support of the justice system for women, and will boost funding for free legal services to women experiencing family violence.

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Ken Lay recently reported that around 40% of police work is family violence related, of which around 65% is responding to repeat offenders.

The Greens will provide special training and improve family violence management within Victoria Police so violent perpetrators are better held to account.

To continue to improve and develop evidence based family violence responses, funding is needed for research and evaluation. Yet, the Labor Government in 2010 cut funding to the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths at the Coroner's Court, stopping it from undertaking reviews of family violence deaths in Victoria.

The Greens will restore funding to the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths, as a critical research project into the causes of family violence deaths.

PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Violence against women stems from inequality in power, men's attitudes and rigid gender roles. We need to tackle the root causes of violence against women, including sexism, gender discrimination, and violence-supporting masculinities. We need to promote respectful relationships.

The Greens will invest in programs to promote respectful relationships from a young age. These programs will operate in schools, sporting clubs, workplaces and the media.

While family violence is a society wide problem, some women are more at risk and less able to escape harm than others. Women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from diverse cultural backgrounds are over-represented amongst family violence victims.

As part of the Victorian Action Plan, the Greens are committed to implementing specialised strategies for preventing violence against women.

IMPROVING CHILD PROTECTION

Having a quality, well-funded child protection system is critical in the response to family violence. The child protection system must work with family violence services to respond to the root causes of child protection concerns. For more information see the Greens Child Protection Policy Initiative.