

Media Release



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Record \$1.9 billion Budget commitment to tackle family violence timely as Victorian frontline response service faces record demand

Today's State Budget announcement of a record \$1.9 billion boost family violence direct response and prevention work is both timely and essential in meeting unprecedented demand on family violence services, according to Annette Gillespie, CEO of **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre.

"More Victorian women and children are contacting services than ever before because they are at risk from family violence.

"Today's Budget announcement will provide a much-needed boost to services.

"In particular, the \$270.8 million program to deliver specialist support for survivors and support recovery, will have a huge impact on the tens of thousands of women and children who are experiencing the horror of family violence.

"The investment of \$448 million to establish 17 safety hubs across the state, will make it easier for women throughout Victoria to access 'one-stop-shop' support for family violence, particularly in regional areas.

"There is no doubt, this investment by the Andrew's Government will save lives."

Ms Gillespie says the first quarter of 2017 has seen unprecedented demand on **safe steps'** services with the safe steps 24/7 phone line receiving the highest number of calls ever in March.

"A staggering 10,293 calls – a 70 per cent increase on March 2016 – were made by those seeking help for family violence. That's an average of 332 calls per day, more than we have ever recorded in a one month period," says **safe steps** CEO, Annette Gillespie.

The March figures are indicative of a year-on-year upsurge in the number of calls to **safe steps**. At the current rate, the projected number of calls expected for the 2016/17 financial will be over 95,000 – a 46 per cent increase on the past financial year.

In the same period, **safe steps** accommodated an average of 95 women and their children, every night.

Budget package an investment that will save lives

safe steps 24/7 phone line received highest number of calls ever in March 2017.

An average of 332 calls per day recorded - a 70 per cent increase on March 2016. 90,000 calls expected in 16/17.

safe steps will hold their annual Candlelight Vigil honouring those affected by family violence on 3rd May at 6pm at Federation Square.

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“On the busiest night in March, there were 138 clients accommodated by **safe steps**, almost three times more than the average in the previous financial year,” says Ms Gillespie.

“Today’s Budget announcement is another example of the Victorian Government showing great responsiveness and leadership in its commitment to women and children’s safety and wellbeing in an effort to eliminate family violence.

“However, family violence is a whole of community issue. We must continue to drive widespread cultural change to build an Australia that respects women and prevents family violence from occurring.

“Further to this, the Federal Government must be willing to follow Victoria’s lead and make wholesale necessary changes to family violence support systems and services as required; if not for the sake of political expediency, then for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of women and children across Australia who each day are being beaten, kicked, threatened, or otherwise hurt by a person who is meant to love and care for them.

“We cannot continue to tolerate a society where one woman a week is murdered.”

Today’s Budget boost comes just a day before the annual **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil which honours women and children who have been killed as a result of family violence.

“The Vigil highlights exactly why government and the community must make ending family violence a priority.

“We invite all community members to take a stand against family violence at the **safe steps** Candlelight Vigil at 6pm on Wednesday 3rd May, at Melbourne’s Federation Square.”

As the state-wide, 24/7 first response to women experiencing family violence, **safe steps** has a proud history of offering assistance to women and children affected by abuse in the home for more than 40 years.

“Women experiencing family violence can call our 24/7 free call family violence response phone line on 1800 015 188 and speak confidentially to another woman for information on family violence support services, legal rights and accommodation options,” says Ms Gillespie.

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre CEO Annette Gillespie is available for comment.

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If you or someone you care about is living with an abusive partner or family member, call safe steps Family Violence Response Centre 24/7 on 1800 015 188.

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