



Victorian Election 2026

A safer Victoria starts with ending family violence



Fear shouldn't live here: A safer Victoria starts with ending family violence

Too many Victorians are living in fear because too little is being done, too late, to stop family violence. Police and courts should be the last resort, but they have become the first system response for victim-survivors, and often only after years of enduring violent and controlling behaviour.

Public money overwhelmingly flows to late interventions - police, courts and prisons. These responses may offer brief risk containment but rarely reduce recidivism and can increase risk. Approximately 1.1 million Victorian men, 35% of the male population, will use violence over their lifetime.ⁱ Yet only 2% of men using violence receive a meaningful behaviour change response, and too often only after high levels of violence.ⁱⁱ Without earlier responses, Victoria enables the cycle to repeat.

Invest in targeted supports for young people to break cycles of violence before they become entrenched

Nearly 1 in 3 Australian 18-19-year-olds report experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the past year. In the past five years, Family Violence Intervention Order cases related to IPV have surged by 33% in the Children's Court, disproportionately impacting young girls.ⁱⁱⁱ There is no dedicated response for children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right and no dedicated government funding to address young people already using intimate partner violence.

Effective work with young people using IPV spans prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. Acting earlier gives victim-survivors, including children, adult parents, partners and ex-partners a real chance at recovery and healing. Young men are most often those perpetrating IPV, and young women suffer the greatest harm.^{iv, v}

Many young men who use violence are victim-survivors of family violence themselves; a complexity that demands sensitive, trauma-informed practice. While not excusing harm or compromising victim-survivor safety.^{vi} Standard adult programs can struggle to engage younger participants, who drop out at higher rates.^{vii, viii} Meli's Young Men's Group – a pilot program that is currently the only dedicated tailored men's behaviour change option for young men aged 18–25 in Victoria – shows what a genuinely age-appropriate response can achieve.^{ix} This program type should not be an outlier. Victoria needs a funded, statewide pathway of tailored responses for young people who use violence.

Responding earlier is not only good social policy. It is good economic policy. No area of government is untouched by the impacts of family violence – health, legal, police, child protection and even transport systems are responding to its impacts every day. Investing in breaking cycles of violence before they become entrenched or worsen – rather than prioritising late-stage legal responses to the same men over and over again – is crucial. New modelling estimates **\$8.3 billion per year nationally** could be saved by intervening earlier.^x

Invest earlier to break the cycle: Stop Victorians living in fear

Victoria must be ready to work with children and young people to change their behaviour as an urgent priority before windows of opportunity close and harm continues to stack up for victim-survivors, families and communities. Young people's violence is less entrenched than adults' with greater capacity for change when the opportunities are available.^{xi} Tailored options to work with children and young people of all ages and life stories is what Victoria needs to break cycles of violence.

Outside Meli's philanthropically funded Young Men's Group pilot, young men aged 18-25 have no dedicated option to change their behaviour, only mainstream adult psychoeducation. Programs grounded in healthy relationship skills and a whole-person approach - treating housing, mental health and trauma as core to the work - produce the strongest outcomes. We have the evidence. Now we need action.

1. **Invest in a co-ordinated and evaluated multi-site pilot program to develop dedicated responses to youth intimate partner violence across the communities most likely to fall through service gaps.**

- We recommend sites include an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, an organisation working with culturally and racially marginalised communities, and an organisation working with LGBTQIA+ young people, alongside a mainstream youth provider.^{xii} This will enable responses to be tested and adapted for different communities.
- A multi-site pilot program needs to include co-location of practitioners and Family Safety Advocates as a program requirement; dedicated, program-specific brokerage; upfront resourcing for Aboriginal-led design; and a funded, sustainable system-integration function.

2. **Immediate cross-sector workforce training to equip youth, early parenting, health and mental health workers who are already in contact with young people to recognise and respond to youth IPV.**

- Schools, housing, health, early parenting and mental health services are already on the front lines, encountering young people using and experiencing IPV every day. Yet those sectors have told us they lack the training, screening tools or referral pathways to intervene effectively. Investing in workforce training is the fastest, most impactful action the next government can take – empowering existing workers to change lives now.
- Children and young people experiencing violence receive the least support in Victoria's family violence system. There must be a dedicated response to children and young people including when they begin using family violence.

ⁱ Ten to Men (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2025) found 1 in 3 men in their study self-reported using violence and estimate 120,000 men start using violence every year. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics census (2021) recorded 3,200,963 males in Victoria. Assuming 35% of Victorian males use violence in their lifetime, 1,120,337 men at 2021 population levels could be expected to use violence in Victoria at some point in their life.

ⁱⁱ Crime Statistics Agency (2025) Service Sector Data Tables record 22,574 unique clients who received perpetrator interventions in the five years to 2025. Compared against the estimated 1,120,337 Victorian men expected to use violence at some point in their lifetime (see note 1), this is approximately 2%. This compares a five-year count of men helped against a lifetime estimate of men expected to use violence, rather than two figures on the same time basis — but on any reasonable reading of the data, only a small fraction of Victorian men who use violence are receiving a meaningful behaviour-change response.

ⁱⁱⁱ Crime Statistics Agency Victoria (2025), Justice System Data Tables 2025: Table 18: Number of unique victims on original FVIO applications by relationship to respondent, victim gender, and court, 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2025.

^{iv} O'Donnell et al. (2023) Intimate partner violence among Australian 18–19 year olds (Growing Up in Australia Snapshot Series Issue 11). Australian Institute of Family Studies.

^v Nicholas et al. (2025) Improving Responses to Young Men's Use of Intimate Partner Violence: Towards a Best Practice Approach. Western Sydney University.

^{vi} It is important to note that most children who experience violence do not go on to use it in adulthood. Fleming et al. (2015) Risk Factors for Men's Lifetime Perpetration of Physical Violence against Intimate Partners: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Eight Countries. *PLOS ONE*, 10(3), e0118639.

^{vii} No to Violence & Meli (2026) Young Men's Behaviour Change Group.

^{viii} Fitz-Gibbon et al. (2024). Engaging in Change: A Victorian study of perpetrator program attrition and participant engagement in men's behaviour change programs. Monash University.

^{ix} See a recent case study outlining the Meli Young Men's Group success engaging this cohort through a tailored program rather than relying on standard Men's Behaviour Change Programs designed for adults.

^x New draft modelling commissioned by No to Violence, currently in preparation for publication, estimates the value of preventing first-time DFV offences alone at \$2.05-\$2.66 billion per year over the next decade. Including the cascading effect of avoided re-offending, the combined value rises to approximately \$83.0 billion over the decade - around \$8.3 billion per year. These estimates exclude prosecution, legal aid, courts administration and corrections costs, meaning they likely understate the true value of earlier intervention.

^{xi} No to Violence (2026) Evidence Review: Addressing young men's use of intimate partner violence.

^{xii} LGBTQIA+ young people, young people with disability, and First Nations young people, who are all over-represented among those using and experiencing this violence, and more likely to be misidentified as the primary aggressor. See Victoria Legal Aid (2025) Feeling Supported, Not Stuck: Rethinking intervention orders for children and young people.



Join us to say, “Fear Shouldn’t Live Here” and demand different from the next government.