

MEDIA RELEASE

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Eastern Community Legal Centre welcomes Victoria's boost to legal and family violence help

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) welcomes the Victorian Government's funding boost to critical family violence and legal support, announced in the State Budget on Tuesday.

Under a \$1.9 billion investment in family violence prevention and response services, an additional \$50 million will be directed to legal help, including \$4.6 million for duty lawyer services to assist women seeking intervention orders at Court.

"Every day, ECLC sees the significant positive impact of providing free quality legal help to women and children experiencing family violence, at the Courts and through the Centre's early intervention work across Melbourne's East. While we await further details of funding allocations, these investments will allow this vital work to continue and develop further, to keep families safe in our community," ECLC CEO Michael Smith said.

The Victorian Government also announced \$14.5 million over four years specifically for community legal centres. Of this, \$600,000 has been directed to supporting the integration of legal help with financial counselling, health services and social services – areas where ECLC works actively with many partners.

"Legal problems don't exist in a vacuum, so strengthening connections between services and working together is crucial to providing people with the help they need, as soon as they need it. We're very pleased to see the government's commitment to investing further in this type of work." Mr Smith said.

"Our Centre and many services have been responding to the scourge of family violence for many years. While the increased attention afforded to this issue over the last few years has been extraordinary, the importance of the vision and commitment of the Andrews Government to lead and implement comprehensive responses cannot be underestimated."

"ECLC particularly wishes to acknowledge the leadership of the Premier, Daniel Andrews, Deputy Premier James Merlino and Attorney-General Martin Pakula in these specific initiatives and thank them for their support for the clients and communities we serve."

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