

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Attorney-General
Minister for Resources



Wednesday, 14 April 2021

FUNDING BOOST TO KEEP MORE WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE

More women living with or at risk of family violence in Melbourne's east will be able to access the support and legal advice they need thanks to funding from the Andrews Labor Government.

Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes announced the Eastern Community Legal Centre would receive \$464,000 for a pilot to expand the crucial early intervention services for women and children to the Knox Local Government Area. The program is currently only available in the Maroondah and Yarra Ranges Local Government areas.

The program is a unique partnership between family violence lawyers and health services, providing a safe and confidential environment for mothers to seek help with family violence issues.

Research shows that women who are pregnant or who have babies are at an increased risk of experiencing family violence.

The program supports women at this highly vulnerable time, arming them with information and linking them to specialist legal assistance and other family violence services.

This unique model – combining health services and family violence legal assistance – meant that women were able to continue accessing the program while public health restrictions were in place last year, through their regular health appointments.

Demand for the program increased by up to 30 per cent on the previous year during this time, mirroring the increased demand for family violence services seen across the state.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service.

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"Seeking help for family violence can be incredibly intimidating – this program gives women a safe, comfortable and non-judgemental environment to take those first steps and get the support they need."

Quote attributable to Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence Gabrielle Williams

"This vital program ensures women can understand their options and access the advice and assistance they need – as early as possible."

Quote attributable to Member for Bayswater Jackson Taylor

"This program has helped many women in our community experiencing family violence, particularly during the challenges arising from the pandemic – and it's fantastic to see this support extended to the Knox community."

Quote attributable to CEO of Eastern Community Legal Centre Michael Smith

"We're proud to be providing vital support to women at a particularly vulnerable time – empowering them to seek help. We're looking forward to expanding the program to benefit even more families."