

Media Release

Jenny Mikakos MLC
Minister for Families & Children
Minister for Youth Affairs



Tuesday, 13 December, 2016

STOPPING FATHERS COMMITTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

In an Australian first, the Andrews Labor Government is taking steps to stop family violence by helping fathers foster better relationships with their children.

A \$5.6 million early intervention program will target fathers experiencing drug or alcohol abuse who have committed, or are at risk of committing family violence.

The Government is investing \$4.6 million over four years for the *Caring Dads* program – an additional \$1 million has been contributed by philanthropic partner Gandel Philanthropy.

The Children's Protection Society piloted the program with initial government funding of \$575,000, helping dads in Melbourne's north eastern suburbs. It will now expand to the city's west and Inner Gippsland.

Fathers attend voluntary group sessions over 17 weeks where they learn parenting skills and the impact of family violence on their children as well as the importance of a respectful relationship with their children's mother.

Referrals to the program are made through alcohol and other drug services, mental health services, child protection, Child FIRST, maternal and child health services, police and other community service providers.

Gandel Philanthropy is a strong advocate for addressing domestic violence and made one of its largest program-focussed grants to support the trial for the next three years.

Caring Dads was developed in Canada and is also currently delivered in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States.

Results from the British trial found mothers and children felt happier and safer because of the program and reported a meaningful improvement in the behaviour of the father.

The Government is implementing all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into family violence – including researching, trialling and evaluating intervention programs for perpetrators. The *Caring Dads* program also complements the Labor Government's landmark 10-year Family Violence Plan.

Quote attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"It's time to end the vicious cycle of family violence and if fathers have exposed their children to violence, they need to realise the impact of their actions."

Quote attributable to Children's Protection Society CEO Aileen Ashford

"As a community we need to enhance the scope of services that assists men early on and supports them to build positive relationships with their children – this program gives us that chance."

Quote attributable to Gandel Philanthropy Chair John Gandel AO

"Gandel Philanthropy trustees believe that the delivery of a pilot program, based on a very successful overseas model directed specifically at the perpetrators of violence, is worthy of support and has the potential to help tackle this pressing and complex social issue."