NEW BENDIGO REFUGE FOR FAMILIES ESCAPING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Women and children escaping family violence will now have access to a new secure refuge in regional Victoria that will keep them safe, while also providing the crucial transitional support services they need.

Premier Daniel Andrews today joined Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan, Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards and family violence workers to officially open the new $3 million Annie North Women’s Refuge.

The state of the art refuge provides crisis accommodation with independent living for families and caters for people with a disability.

The refuge will provide 24 hour support and give women and children escaping family violence access to a broader range of services including a counselling room, a computer lab, a satellite classroom and an art therapy room.

Crucially the facility will also ensure women and children can stay in their community if it’s safe to do so, and maintain links with their family and friends so they can get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

The Andrews Labor Government’s work to end family violence is about putting people first and ensuring that victims are protected and perpetrators are held to account.

The Labor Government has invested more than $285 million in the last two Victorian budgets to boost social housing stock, redevelop refuges and provide rental assistance to get family violence victims housed safely and quickly.

This is part of the Labor Government’s unprecedented $1.9 billion package announced in the Victorian Budget 2017/18 to tackle the scourge of family violence – more than the Federal Government or any other state in the nation.

**Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews**

“Family violence is our nation’s number one law and order issue and there’s nothing more important than keeping women and children safe.”

“This state-of-the-art refuge will provide a safer, more secure environment for vulnerable families who are experiencing the devastating impact of violence at home.”

**Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan**

“This new facility sets the gold standard for crisis support accommodation. It is just one part of our enormous effort to tackle family violence by intervening early, protecting victims and holding perpetrators to account.”

**Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards**

“The Bendigo community fought hard for Annie North’s new facility and today’s opening is testament to all their work – this refuge will keep women and children safe and give them services they need to get back on their feet.”