

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2016–17

Melbourne — 18 May 2016

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Witnesses

Ms Fiona Richardson, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence,

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy and Service Delivery Reform, and

Mr Justin McDonnell, Assistant Director, Women and Family Violence Royal Commission Branch,
Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2016–17 budget estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to welcome the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP; Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy and Service Delivery Reform, from the Department of Premier and Cabinet; Mr Justin McDonnell, Assistant Director, Women and Family Violence Royal Commission Branch, Department of Premier and Cabinet; and in the gallery Ms Amber Griffiths, Manager, Women and Royal Commission Branch, and Mr Joshua Ticchi, Senior Policy Adviser, Women and Royal Commission Branch.

All evidence is taken by this committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege. Witnesses will not be sworn but are requested to answer all questions succinctly, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

Questions from the committee will be asked on a group basis, meaning that specific time has been allocated to members of the government, opposition and crossbench to ask a series of questions in a set amount of time before moving onto the next group. I will advise witnesses who will be asking questions at each segment.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard, and you will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

All written communication to witnesses must be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way and cannot photograph, audio record or videorecord any part of these proceedings. Members of the media must remain focused only on the persons speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I now invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms RICHARDSON — Thank you, Chair, and thank you, PAEC committee members, for today's session. It has been a big year since I saw you last with respect to family violence. Before I dive into the package, I do want to first up acknowledge all of the service providers and advocates with respect to family violence who have been working for decades to see this kind of reform. I do want to acknowledge them, and I do want to particularly acknowledge victims' voices and one voice in particular, Rosie Batty, who I believe did wake a nation with respect to family violence. I also want to acknowledge the work of state MPs, the parliamentary friendship group. Tackling family violence does enjoy bipartisan support. There have been very strong statements from our Premier; there have also been very strong statements from the Leader of the Opposition. I welcome those statements and also their commitment to ending the harm of family violence.

Visual presentation.

Ms RICHARDSON — The whole-of-government investment which is summarised there in terms of the 572, these investments sum up to a substantial investment in family violence — in fact the most substantial investment in family violence in Victoria's and Australia's history. We are responding to 65 of the most urgent of the 227 royal commission recommendations as part of this package. In fact if you look at the royal commission report, you can categorise the recommendations as falling into prevention, response and those recommendations that are about reforming the system to ensure that our broken system can better service the needs of victims of family violence. Similarly our budget follows a prevention initiative, response initiatives and also what we need to do to reform the family violence system.

If we have a look at a glance at the \$572 million package, with respect to prevention it is a \$61.6 million package. To put this in context, there was a \$2 million new initiative spend in the last budget, so this is a significant increase to prevention initiatives. With respect to response, there is \$152 million to form part of a housing blitz, which directly speaks to a range of recommendations made in the royal commission report. There is \$122 million for vulnerable children, to keep children safe from harm and to give them the best start in life. There is also \$103 million for specialist family violence services to deal with the increase in demand for those

services and in particular \$25 million for Aboriginal communities, because we know they are at particular risk of family violence.

The \$82.3 million reforming the system package is about implementing many of the recommendations. We are starting the process to implement many of the recommendations of the royal commission. We have acknowledged that we have a broken system and we have to in fact root and branch reform the family violence system in order to keep women and their children safe.

Key achievements for 15–16 — I want to highlight these, because for the first time we are talking, debating and focusing on family violence like never before. The royal commission was of course the first royal commission in Australia and it has given us, in a sense, a platform to deliver reform to the family violence system. But it was of course the then opposition leader and now Premier who called for Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. Can I say across the sector it has been very much welcomed, and it has formed part of so many conversations and so many debates, not just across the sector, I have got to say, but within Victorian homes as well, and that is significant. It ran for 13 months; it had 25 days of public hearings; it received over 1000 submissions; it interviewed over 220 witnesses; and it held 44 community sessions, not just in metro Melbourne but in rural and regional Victoria as well.

The key achievement with respect to prevention in particular was our Australian-first Victoria Against Violence campaign. I understand that after the campaign ran in fact the United Nations had approached Sydney to try to get Sydney to be part of this worldwide effort to draw attention to the harm of family violence, and Sydney knocked them back. In the meantime we just got on with delivering an Australian first, which was of course our 16-day campaign to focus on violence against women and children. I think the highlight of that session, as many MPs have spoken to me about, was the day that we dedicated to family violence. We brought in Rosie Batty, Kristy McKellar and Graham Ashton at a joint sitting of Parliament, and we dedicated a day to debating the harm of family violence.

We also announced another Victorian first, which is a gender equality strategy. It actually took my office three goes to convince me that Victoria did not have a gender equality strategy, so we have got on with the job of producing one of those. Respectful relationships was also put into the school curriculum, and we also had a \$2 million investment in prevention initiatives. The parliamentary friendship group was also established. There has also been \$20 000 given to the City of Melbourne to work in partnership with the state government to develop Victoria's first family violence victims memorial.

In terms of response, there was an \$81.3 million package in last year's budget, a \$16 million Family Violence Fund and also a commitment to put in place family violence leave provisions in public sector enterprise agreements. The Victim Survivors Advisory Council was also announced, the family violence statewide steering committee and also we are working on a world-first family violence index. The \$61.6 million that has been allocated for prevention initiatives covers the respectful relationships program, building on the gender equality strategy — \$9 million worth of initiatives there — and \$23 million for targeted prevention initiatives.

The response in the 16–17 budget initiatives covers the specialist family violence services, 104 million; the housing blitz; 122 for vulnerable children; the Aboriginal 25 million package; and the \$11 million for perpetrator accountability.

In terms of reforming the system, this is actually significant work that is being undertaken, led by DPC and other departments as well. What was highlighted consistently by the royal commission was that our current family violence system is broken, that the siloing of service delivery is having an impact upon risk, and all of these measures are designed to deliver a new family violence system in order to address the risk of family violence, properly assess it, properly manage it, but also ensure that the focus and effort that we now have on family violence reform actually continues on into the future.

The next steps. We have got a new Family Violence Steering Committee, and the names of the committee have been announced. The victims advisory council will be chaired by Rosie Batty. These two committees will work in partnership with us as we implement the 227 recommendations and roll out the \$572 million package. There are also task forces in housing and child protection, and at the end of this year, in keeping with the royal commission's recommendations, we want to announce a 10-year action plan, as I say, to continue the reforming agenda on family violence.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. We will have government questions now until 2.53 p.m.

Ms WARD — Welcome, Minister. Welcome, everyone. Thank you very much, Minister, for the work that you have done in this space; I personally am very grateful. Minister, can I get you to go to budget paper 3, page 9, and have a look at the targeted prevention initiatives for Victorians. There is a significant amount of money, \$23 million, that is allocated within this package to help prevent family violence. Can you please talk to us around how this money and these programs will actually address the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. Thanks for the question. The package with respect to prevention in terms of new funding initiatives is a \$61 million package. This is of course the largest ever single investment in preventing family violence. It includes \$9 million for programs designed to achieve equality for women, and that includes development of our gender equality strategy, it includes the women on boards initiative and also women's leadership initiatives. The \$21 million for respectful relationships is to expand the respectful relationships program to kinders and schools.

There is also a very important set of initiatives for targeted prevention programs. The royal commission highlighted the fact that we do not spend anywhere near enough on prevention but in particular there are specific cohorts and diverse communities for whom there are no properly evaluated initiatives for prevention, and that \$23 million targets diverse communities, including Aboriginal, LGBTI, women with disabilities, elderly victims living in rural and regional communities, and also adolescent perpetrators of violence.

There is also a significant boost for the scaling up of prevention initiatives. So there are great many women's organisations that are currently running prevention initiatives and there is an opportunity to work with organisations like Our Watch and those who have been in this space for some time to deliver those programs once they have been properly evaluated and run them out across wider communities. So there is significant funding there. There will need to be, though, some research and evaluations done, no doubt, but we are very keen to see a prevention strategy that does not exclude anyone in the community, that does not see anybody missing out on important messages that we want to deliver with respect to preventing family violence in the first place.

Ms WARD — What about this 18 million reaching out to all Victorians where they live, work and play? Why have you decided that that is a priority for the government?

Ms RICHARDSON — One of the things that we know is that kids, for example, outside the home spend most of their time at school. In terms of us working people, we spend the bulk of our time at work. We need to have targeted programs that consider the places and spaces where people actually spend their lives. That means everybody has to be engaged in the prevention initiatives.

The CHAIR — Minister, can I just ask you to move your microphone a little bit closer.

Ms RICHARDSON — I will lean in.

The CHAIR — I think the gallery are having trouble hearing you, that is all.

Ms RICHARDSON — So we actually need prevention initiatives that are not just about targeting specific cohorts or high-risk groups, we need to have prevention initiatives that work across various settings — in the workplace — —

Ms WARD — Have you got prevention money allocated to diverse groups?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, we have, but with respect to workplace settings and school settings, those kinds of prevention initiatives need to be tailored and will be somewhat different depending upon the audience that they are trying to reach. There is \$18 million that has been allocated in that suite of prevention initiatives — \$2 million for the diverse communities that I mentioned earlier, \$0.5 million is for adolescents who are disengaged and may not be reached by school programs, 0.5 as well for adults in workplace development, education and bystander programs.

Ms WARD — Sorry, Minister, if I could just grab you for one tick, so on the 0.5 million allocated to adolescents who are outside scope, these are kids who have been experiencing family violence? Are you trying

to tap into where they are at — kids who might be couch-surfing? Is that the kind of thing you might be thinking about?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, sure, but it is also adolescents who are disengaged as well from the normal school curriculum so perhaps are not captured by a respectful relationships program but they are those vulnerable adolescents that you want to target with messages about prevention and about violence in particular. There is also \$1 million to engage with CALD communities in particular, and also \$1 million for seniors to raise awareness of elder abuse and to increase our understanding about the kinds and the forms that elder abuse in respect of violence takes.

Ms WARD — Minister, what I am interested in is that we are putting this money in and you are working towards significant cultural change, which is to be applauded, but what kind of things has the Victorian government done in the past to try to create cultural change and to try to change people's attitudes?

Ms RICHARDSON — The respectful relationships program is actually built on some work that was done by Our Watch across 19 schools last year. That program was actually run to see whether the whole-of-school approach that they were taking was actually going to change the attitudes across the school community. As a consequence of the successful evaluation of that program, we have been able to then fund respectful relationships across other schools. That is part, obviously, of the 572 budget initiative. We take the view, and the sector reflects this view as well, that it is very important to have an evidence base to all the work that we are doing. We know the system is broken so we do not want to keep funding programs that do not work or do not actually change attitudes. So we need to make sure everything that we do, particularly in this prevention space, actually makes things better with respect to attitudinal change and does not make things worse.

Ms WARD — So that includes listening to victims and family violence advocates, to continue to listen to them and to adapt to what they are seeing as changes in the community or liaising/communicating with them to make sure that our policies are relevant to their communities that they are servicing?

Ms RICHARDSON — What was the first thing you said? You dropped out.

Ms WARD — I am assuming that that also includes working with victims and family violence advocates to ensure that our policies are heading in the right direction.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, sure. I mean the level of awareness with respect to family violence is not consistent across the community. In particular when you look at the forms of abuse that family violence takes, there is a very different range of understandings and knowledge base about that. If you going to prevent family violence, and we obviously want to do a great deal more in that space to prevent family violence in the first place, we actually need to know and understand who we are talking to and we have to communicate that the family violence that they may be experiencing is unreasonable or it is unlawful and that we need to take appropriate measures to support them.

It is a very important area to get right, though, because if you take, for example, with respect to elder abuse, it takes a very different form and most of the research in prevention is done through the lens of intimate partner violence and violence perpetrated by men against women. When you are trying then to lift prevention initiatives within that frame and apply them to diverse communities or groups that are not easily put into that category, you can get it wrong and you can misunderstand, in a sense, what they are going through and not be targeting in the way that you need to be. This investment is obviously a significant investment but also designed to ensure that everything we do does actually change attitudes. One of the things we know with respect to family violence — our research informs us this well and truly — is that the drivers of family violence are attitudes towards women and the status of women in our society. Changing those attitudes is not going to happen overnight.

Ms WARD — And this is my next question — it is the \$9 million question, which is what you are allocating to promote equality among women. Can you see that change can occur?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, in fact the research is in with respect to changing attitudes. And that is, if you can change attitudes towards women and change the status of women within society, you will decrease violence against women. The countries that have better attitudes towards women and enjoy better equality between men and women also enjoy lesser rates of violence against women. That is why I have got to say I was somewhat stunned to discover that Victoria did not have a gender equality strategy, because it is so clear with respect to

the evidence base that we have, and that is why that gender equality strategy is so central to preventing family violence in the first place by tackling those harmful attitudes that drive some men — clearly not the majority of men, but some men — to believe that violence against women is acceptable.

Ms WARD — Are you experiencing any resistance to the idea that we do need to have a gender equality strategy, that we do need to invest money in the state into promoting gender equality and helping change attitudes?

Ms RICHARDSON — Look, I think some of the resistance focuses on a misunderstanding, wilful or otherwise, about the gendered nature of this crime. So at times what you will hear is people talking about women being as many as men perpetrators of violence. If you accept that assumption, which is clearly wrong, what they then seek to do is to say, ‘Well, if that is the case, there is no need for a gender equality strategy. It is not attitudes that drive violence against women’. I guess it is part of a broader debate.

The debate is clearly not over, but I think though that people are talking about this issue and thinking about this issue in new ways and are open-minded as well to preventing family violence and what do we need to do to reduce the rates of family violence. So in the past we have spoken about gender equality as being important to deliver fairness and in order to ensure that women can reach their potential. We have talked about it as being important as part of an economic narrative as well.

The CHAIR — Order! The Deputy Chair until 3.04 p.m.

Ms WARD — Thanks, Minister.

Mr MORRIS — Welcome, Minister. Budget paper reference is BP3, pages 8 and 9. Essentially the questions I will be asking are couched in terms of seeking information on the background rather than for any other purposes. On the whole-of-government family violence package, you recently announced funding for 65 of the 227 recommendations from the royal commission. I understand you will be releasing a 10-year plan later this year. Do you expect that the plan will include funding outlines for the remaining 162 recommendations?

Ms RICHARDSON — Do I expect the plan will announce the funding?

Mr MORRIS — Do you expect the plan to include funding outlines for the remaining 162 recommendations?

Ms RICHARDSON — When the Premier and I made the announcement of the 572 million package and also announced that there would be a 10-year plan in keeping with the recommendation of the royal commission, both he and I made it clear that it would be an initial investment, a first step, with respect to responding to the demand for family violence services, and also that, as part of the reforming the family violence system, we would need to do more in that space as well. The 572 million does, as you have highlighted, address the 65 most urgent recommendations of the 227, but there are a great deal many more initiatives and policies and work that need to be taken as part of the royal commission report. And there will be, as part of an ongoing reform agenda, no doubt other investments that will need to be made.

Mr MORRIS — Just to be clear, the 10-year plan will not necessarily include specific funding outlines for each of the recommendations. It may include an indication that a group of recommendations might be addressed down the track. Is that what we can expect?

Ms RICHARDSON — One of the things we have resolved to do as we implement all of the recommendations of the royal commission is to work in partnership with the sector, so we have put representatives together on a steering committee — you know, the peaks and advocates and the like. We have also set up a victims advisory council to be chaired by Rosie Batty. Working with that group we plan to not only do the 10-year plan, but to think about what are the investments that may or may not need to be made.

So it is actually quite an enormous task in fact between now and November, and I do not want to in a sense pre-empt any of those discussions and work that needs to be undertaken. But no-one is under any illusion, having read the royal commission report, that there will need to be further investments in particular to fix the broken system and in particular in order to prevent family violence in the first place. With respect to prevention, this is not something that is going to occur overnight, and it is not something that one initiative is going to deliver in a short period of time.

Mr MORRIS — Understood. It is a lot more complex than that.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, so I do not think any of us — and obviously yourself included — are under any illusions that if we are to end the harm of family violence, we are going to have to have a dedicated effort over a considerable period of time to bring down the harm of family violence.

Mr MORRIS — Just in terms of the work that is to be done, can you tell me how many reviews and expert advisory committees are included amongst the 227 recommendations?

Ms RICHARDSON — The expert advisory committee recommended in the royal commission report or — —

Mr MORRIS — I understand there were a number of reviews and other expert advisory committees recommended in the recommendations. I am just wondering how many of the recommendations go to those sorts of bodies.

Ms RICHARDSON — There is an expert advisory panel in the royal commission recommendations. Are you referring to that in particular, or are you referring to any expert advisory panel?

Mr MORRIS — Further reviews and just further work to be done, yes.

Ms RICHARDSON — In terms of the consultation and co-design process — that is, the steering committee and the victims advisory council that are working through the 227 recommendations — we envisage that there will need to be specific expert task force groups, if you like, working on specific recommendations. So as I said at the beginning, if you look at the recommendations, you can divide them up into prevention recommendations, response recommendations, governance recommendations and reforming the system recommendations, and clearly there is expertise across the sector and across the wider community that you need to bring in to drill down into those recommendations.

When you talk to people, interestingly, about their interpretation of the recommendations, at times you do get two views from differing people. So it is actually important that we get as many of the experts around the table, you know, in a task force or in an expert panel, to give us their views and to properly advise us about how the recommendations themselves should be implemented.

Mr MORRIS — Okay, that is good. I am just interested in the funding aspect. There has certainly been some discussion about potential taxes or levies — obviously the government is running a surplus. I am just wondering as the responsible minister whether you have a view on the most appropriate manner of funding the necessary work.

Ms RICHARDSON — The royal commission's last recommendation, in fact recommendation 227, did ask us to investigate options for increased funding capacity. It talked about three options in fact, one being redirecting funding from other sources, another being a new revenue source, and the other would be exploring a partnership with the commonwealth in some way, shape or form to get additional funding.

The royal commission, though, also called on us to have a look at the gaps in our understanding about funding across the system. So we know, for example, that out of the police budget about 779 million of that every year goes to family violence response. However, if you are trying to drill down in the total cost of family violence in the state budget, there are gaps in our understanding, and the royal commission actually has made a specific recommendation to fill in those gaps so that we can get on top of what is the total cost of family violence.

But while the picture is somewhat incomplete, there are, of course, plenty of warning signs that not enough funding has been directed to support victims of family violence and to prevent it in the first place. That is why we have dedicated the \$572 million package. This is, of course, a significant investment, but we know, as I said earlier, there is more that will need to be done as we implement the recommendations of the report. These debates I think are really very important because they speak to our priorities and what we stand for, not just as a government but what we stand for as a community. But we need to have all the facts before us and we need to consult with victims and service providers so that we do not, for example, continue to spend money on programs that do not work, but that we start to spend money on programs that we do know work. So, for example, men's — —

Mr MORRIS — Sorry, I am just conscious of the time. Just to have focus a little bit, you said one of the options might be additional revenue, but clearly you have got to do the work to establish whether additional revenue is required first. I am just wondering how long that is going to take and when we might be in a position to be having the discussion about if additional revenue is required and, if so, what form it might take?

Ms RICHARDSON — The specific recommendation that I referred to earlier coming from the royal commission asking us to fill in the gaps of knowledge around the total spend on family violence, that recommendation from memory has to be implemented within 12 months, and so we have got on with the task of actually thinking about all the various siloed services and how we pull together a proper analysis of the funding. To give you a time frame, I would say next PAEC, I guess, would be an opportunity to drill down to those figures.

But I think there is actually a role for each and every one of us. As parliamentarians we understand the state budget better than most. There is an opportunity there to talk and engage in this across the chamber to see what we can do to increase a knowledge and understanding about family violence costs but also to look at ways that we can fix the broken system and, as I say, allocate resources to programs that actually work as opposed to continuing to spend money on programs that do not work — —

Mr MORRIS — That do not — —

Ms RICHARDSON — So for example — —

Mr MORRIS — In the remaining few seconds, you touched on the recommendations for implementation within 12 months. Are you on track to have them fully implemented by March next year?

Ms RICHARDSON — As I say, we have put together the steering committee and the victims advisory council, led by Rosie Batty. We are determined to deliver each and every one of those royal commission recommendations within the time frame that has been set by the royal commission, and we will also — —

Mr MORRIS — So for the 12 months ones, effectively March next year. Is that — —

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. The royal commission has called for an implementation monitor, who will also track our progress of each of the 227 recommendations and give information back to the community about them.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Pennicuik needs to leave at 4.00 p.m. today, so Ms Pennicuik will have from 3.04 p.m. to 3.17 p.m. to ask questions in relation to both of your portfolios, Minister — in terms of prevention of family violence as well as women. Ms Pennicuik until 3.17 p.m.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Chair, and thank you for that last-minute adjustment. I apologise to other members of the committee who may not have been aware of that until right now. Welcome, Minister. Good afternoon, people from the department. Thank you for coming to the hearing today.

Minister, you have outlined \$572 million, which is a large amount of money, devoted to this issue — the family violence prevention package — and that it is explicitly aimed at 65 of the 227 recommendations. I will go to those recommendations in a moment. One thing I did raise with the Attorney-General was the reaction of the community legal centres with regard to the allocation of funding to them of \$4.6 million for family violence legal assistance, with half of that going to Victoria Legal Aid. I just wondered about your comment on that too, because in terms of the \$81.3 million response part of the package it does mention there additional legal services, counselling services and others under that allocation. Given that the CLCs already provide a holistic service in this area, I am just wondering why more is not targeted to the existing expertise that is there?

Ms RICHARDSON — Thanks for the question. The royal commission has rightly highlighted that every family violence specialist service, the courts, the police, are all stretched with respect to demand and pressure on their services. Clearly we need to address that demand and we need to do something to address the broken system in order to bring down demand and prevent family violence in the first place.

If you analyse the demand across the system, the area that the royal commission actually calls on us to prioritise with respect to funding for this year's budget is in fact family violence specialist services. So those are the L17 recipients, for example, and specifically the recommendation calls on us in this year's budget to increase our

funding for those services. With respect to CLCs, you rightly identified that in last year's budget they received additional funding out of the \$81 million in last's budget. As part of this year's budget, the \$572 million package, they have received an additional \$4.6 million for legal assistance for VLA and for community legal centres.

We are under no illusions, though, that there is enormous pressure across the system not just for family violence services but for courts and for police and the like. We have made an investment not just at this year's budget but in last year's budget, and also out of the \$16 million family violence fund that we set up at last year's budget. These kinds of pressures and strains on the system are going to continue for some time, particularly as we are trying to reform the system and ensure that we can deliver the supports that women need. Can I say, though, quite specifically to you in response to your question: the majority of women actually do not use the justice system as they are trying to respond to concerns of family violence. The majority of women actually go to non-legal centres to get help.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes. That is not to say that it does not arise when they are there for other reasons, and that is why the holistic service that they then go on to provide — —

Ms RICHARDSON — That is not to say that those legal centres that are supporting victims of family violence should not get funding — far from it. That is why we have made the investment that we have not just in this year's budget but in last year's budget. Having said that, though, it is particularly challenging when the federal government refuses to increase its allocation of funding for community legal centres. That puts additional pressure back on states and territories to increase the funding for community legal centres.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I am sure they will be interested in your answer. I am too, because I have been certainly aware of the fact that they are very stretched in terms of not being able to meet the demand. If we could just turn to budget paper 3, page 16, which is 'Preventing family violence in diverse communities'. That is \$2 million for two years. Minister, could you just give a little bit more detail on that and which particular recommendation that is aimed at? Also, how will consultation be designed and look like with those communities, particularly the CALD community but also others that are listed in that initiative?

Ms RICHARDSON — I will not repeat what I said earlier with respect to this \$2 million of investment, but to pick up your point about the design of these kinds of initiatives, it is true to say that with respect to prevention initiatives in diverse communities, there are not a lot of programs to pick off the shelf. There is some significant work that needs to be done to design these programs and evaluate these programs, but what we have said from the get-go — in fact even before the royal commission released its report — is that we want to put in place initiatives that are co-designed and take into consideration the views of these diverse communities. There is no point putting together a prevention initiative that actually does not take into consideration the needs of these diverse communities.

The standout example of this is of course in the Aboriginal community. We often talk about needing to go around the world to look at world's best practice with respect to family violence and preventing family violence, but the truth is, if you have a look at Aboriginal family violence-led initiatives, they are world's best practice. We can actually learn from the delivery and how they go about delivering prevention and response with respect to family violence.

That consultation and co-design is not just a one-way street; it is an opportunity to learn from these diverse communities about what will work and what they consider will not work, because there is no point investing \$2 million in initiatives that actually do not make a difference and change attitudes towards women.

Apparently you asked which recommendation was it, and it is recommendation 187 of the royal commission report.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you. Minister, given the task there, as you have outlined it in terms of consulting with the different communities, if you look under that particular initiative, you have got LGBTI community, Aboriginal community, people with disability, the elderly, people in rural and regional communities and \$2 million. It does seem like not a lot to cover all of those communities. What I am really interested in is that to start the consultation and set up ways of engaging and working on those prevention strategies — because if you spread it out across those communities, it seems not a lot. I wonder if you could comment on that?

Ms RICHARDSON — Sure. The consultation and co-design is the structure through which — or the lens through which, I guess — we will be making decisions about this investment.

Take, for example, rural and regional prevention initiatives. There are some very interesting and well evaluated programs coming out of New Zealand, prevention initiatives that have been very successful and have actually changed the look and feel of very many smaller communities in regional New Zealand. That is a package of initiatives, in a sense, that you could perhaps take off the shelf and see whether they would work in our local communities. However, I would be reluctant to see big buckets of money being put towards programs that actually have not been evaluated and shown to work effectively.

Ms PENNICUIK — I agree with you there.

Ms RICHARDSON — So the advantage of having this initial investment of 572, the advantage of having a plan to announce — a 10-year plan — at the end of the year, the advantage of working it in that way is that we can actually take some time to put in place the experts that we need to consult with respect to it and also trial some of these programs to see whether they will work across the state in various communities. But also it gives us time to talk to those diverse communities, because the last thing any of us wants to see is their views not reflected in the prevention initiatives that we put in place.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister. If we could just move to women, but it really is sort of following on. It is really partly family violence as well. It is at BP3, page 9, with regard to the initiative ‘Victims’ experience of the justice system’, and there is \$8 million over two years for that particular initiative. I wonder if you could just provide a little bit of detail on that initiative there, such as: will you be working with women that have been through the criminal justice system, experts in the area et cetera?

Ms RICHARDSON — At every public forum, at every conceivable debate that we have with respect to family violence, victims will talk about their court experience being at times retraumatising and at times wanting with respect to meeting and fulfilling their needs, and in particular keeping them safe from harm. The royal commission also talks about the need to reform aspects of our justice system. Victims talk about in particular and highlight intervention orders. They say things like, ‘They’re not worth the paper that they’re written on’. They feel also that being in a court space with the perpetrator at times is very challenging, obviously, and there is in fact some investment in the budget to enable victims to appear separately from — —

Ms PENNICUIK — And some legislation in that regard as well.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes.

Ms PENNICUIK — Minister, sorry. I am very interested in a bit more, but I just want to follow up, given that I have got hardly any time — and you might have to take this on notice — with the one on women, at BP3, page 9, ‘Achieving equality for Victorian women’ and about the boards. I am just wondering if those initiatives will include mandatory quotas for women’s participation on public company boards and boards of organisations that receive Victorian government funding.

Ms RICHARDSON — Our gender equality strategy has included some consultations, and we have had about 200 submissions. Some of those submissions have talked about the initiative that you have just highlighted. We are going to have a further series of consultations particularly with the private sector to talk about some of the measures that they have put in place that have actually made a difference, and there are some companies, in fact, that are leading the public sector with respect to the status of women within their workplaces.

There is some work to be done. We are looking at all of the initiatives, not just here in Australia but around the world, that have actually been successful in improving the status of women in workplaces, and no doubt that initiative will be weighed up against all others to see what we can do and fast-track and improve the status of women in Victoria. It is so important because it then drives the attitudes about women, which then drive the rates of violence against women. So getting it right, getting the suite of initiatives right, is obviously critically important to us.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Welcome, Minister and departmental officers. I am just wanting to talk a bit further about respectful relationships — BP3, page 8. It was interesting what you were saying — you have touched on

this a bit in the hearing — when you were talking about some people not believing it is a gendered crime, in a sense. The guy that we had in the chamber — I cannot remember his name — who spoke, together with the police commissioner and — —

Ms RICHARDSON — Rodney Vlasis, yes.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Yes, Rodney. He made quite an impression. I am not trying to put words in his mouth, but effectively what I recall from that conversation is that even those who are not perpetrators, which is the majority of men, still play a role to varying degrees in creating an environment, or supporting an environment or not calling out aspects of an environment which others then operate within. I thought it was just something intrinsically about me that makes me not a perpetrator, but it is actually about the environment. It is about a whole range of things. I suppose what I am trying to say by that is there is so much to consider in that space, it is just so abundantly around us, that we cannot see it sometimes. It is like the unconscious bias that I think we have spoken about before. Just with that little contribution from me — not that you need that, Minister; you know this stuff 100 per cent better — can you drill down a bit further into what that line item for respectful relationships for children and young people, the \$21.9 million, will actually do in schools? Where is the evidence? What are some of those interesting evidence-based examples that we could learn from?

Ms RICHARDSON — Just to pick up your point, I think one of the most challenging realisations in ending the harm of family violence is the knowledge that the vast majority of people are obviously not perpetrators of violence. Nonetheless, each and every one of us has a role to play in ending and changing those attitudes that are the drivers of violence against women, and I think for some time, just as you summarised, we have thought, ‘Well, I don’t fall into that category, therefore there is no role for me to play with respect to ending the harm of family violence’.

So when we look at that through respectful relationships, one of the things that is fabulous — there are very many things, but one of the key things that is so fabulous — about children is that they are open to the influences that they can have on their environment, and they are not closed to new ideas and debating these topics. And we know that we need to do that before some of these stereotypes are set. In particular with respect to stereotypes, we know that those are formed in the kindergarten years, so this program, which looks at extending it not just for school but in kindergartens, is actually really very important because by the time kids leave kinder and enter school they are reflecting some of the attitudes at home or in the wider environment, which are limiting attitudes for women or placing women second class to men and boys.

So this respectful relationships program, as I said earlier, is built on the work that was done by Our Watch last year, which was evaluated. It was found to be most effective in schools where there was a whole-of-community approach, so it was not just about training teachers and having forums in classrooms; it was about engaging the wider parent community as well about the programs.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Sorry, Minister. I think the royal commission actually specifically refers to the whole-of-school approach in the recommendations.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, it does. In fact a key part of their ‘Prevention’ chapter is about education. If you are looking at successful programs that have been run, in fact Victoria leads the way and is recognised around the world with respect to changing attitudes, changing some of these entrenched attitudes. Road safety and all of the initiatives that have been in that space are Victorian initiatives, Victorian led, and in fact jurisdictions around the world have lifted our work and applied it in other jurisdictions. What those initiatives have done is focus on the next generation, the ones that are open minded, the ones that want to actually engage and debate these issues in new and fresh ways. I remember as a kid sitting in the back seat of the car, saying, ‘Put your seatbelt on. Put your seatbelt on’.

We know that we need on prevention a whole-of-community approach, but we also know — and the royal commission obviously has identified this as well — that the school cohort is a really important cohort to get right. That is why this investment of \$21 million for a respectful relationships program is so important.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — And I suppose it uses the school as a vehicle for the broader community that hangs off the school, so the family, the parents, the household, where the kids go home after school.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just in relation to the curriculum resource, it is already in schools; is that right?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. It was added to the curriculum last year.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Last year, sorry. That is right. Who was involved, what stakeholders were involved, in putting that together? Who was consulted?

Ms RICHARDSON — When Our Watch was putting its programs in place in the schools, the trial schools, it was working from programs and curriculum that had been developed in conjunction with the education department. I am not a teacher or an educator, but I do understand that you actually need to target the material to age groups and you need to then respond to questions in a particular way. All of that work has been done and evaluated and shown to be very effective, as the royal commission has highlighted, if it is done across the whole school.

It then means that children are of course talking about this in the classroom, and then they are going home and they are talking about this with their parents. As you highlighted earlier, for parents who have said, ‘Well, actually this doesn’t relate to me, because I wouldn’t commit violence or abuse my partner’, it starts those conversations and gets people thinking about the need to end the harm of family violence through tackling some of the attitudes. It is interesting when you see children talk about these kinds of issues. They challenge the stereotypes in ways. Young children do not see gender. They do not see disability. They do not see sex. They just see human beings — wanting to reach their potential or play with them, whatever.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — And they are more willing to question, too, I think.

Ms RICHARDSON — That is right. They are open to — —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — My sister told me a story yesterday that my nephew went to school and when she went to pick him up yesterday he said, ‘Mummy, I’ve got to tell you something’ — he is six — ‘Joe’, some other kid in school, ‘chooses what he gets in his lunchbox, so from now on I will choose what is in my lunchbox. You won’t tell me’. They transfer what they learn from school, so that has the capacity to completely expand the circle of influence of this program when they also start talking to each other.

Ms RICHARDSON — I remember when my kid came home talking about sex education at school. I remember my husband and I were sitting there and we were having this really interesting and open conversation, and I looked to the right and my husband had disappeared. He was like, ‘No, too much for me. I’m out of here’. It is interesting. Parents will engage in this in different ways and feel comfortable or uncomfortable talking about these things. That is why these kinds of programs are really very important. As I say, kids are fabulous at absorbing information, reflecting on it and, as I say, being open minded.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Minister, as the father of five-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, I am not going to comment any further as to that conversation coming up in the next few years for me, but anyway. Budget paper 3, pages 8 and 9 again, Minister, the line item about the hubs in 17 locations — \$5 million is for the next year. I understand there will be a location in each of the DHHS areas. What is the decision-making process as to where they will actually be located?

Ms RICHARDSON — Again, with respect to the hubs, we understand that a one size fits all is not going to work across those 17 DHHS boundaries. That is where the co-location and design consultation process becomes very important, so going out to communities, reflecting on the needs of those individual communities, making decisions too about where those hubs should be located and importantly, with respect to rural and regional communities, doing what the royal commission highlighted, having a look at what technology can also be used to support remote communities in particular who are going to be some distance from the hub, wherever you locate it within the DHHS boundary.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — I guess that is where I am getting to. I think you might actually have had a letter from my colleague the member for Lowan, who is concerned that in her DHHS region Warrnambool is the biggest regional city but it also takes in as far as the southern Mallee and it would be 3 hours away from people there, and likewise in Gippsland, so it is a bit of a tricky one. Is there likely to be any consideration given to additional hubs in some of those regional areas?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. There would be consideration not only of that but of the look and feel and form of the hubs. We have got a number of different models that we can actually choose from that are in place. You may be aware of the centre in Bendigo, the No To Violence centre in Bendigo, which is a hubbed service. Quantum services you would know well, out in Morwell. Very many services are provided there. There is also the Coleman model co-located at a school in Doveton, the living and learning centres, the children and family centres that have been put in place by the minister for children. There are so many co-designed, co-hubbed services, co-located services that are in place already in Victoria. This is not about putting in place a hub that is a one size fits all. It is about saying, ‘What can we reflect in the community and what will then complement the hub?’. There will no doubt — —

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Just on that, can I just ask: it is just a one-off \$5 million for these; is that then to be supplemented in the 10-year plan later in the year?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Because surely it will not just be 5 million for one year.

Ms RICHARDSON — No. The 5 million is there and designed to do some of that preliminary work — talking to communities, particularly rural and regional communities. The DHHS boundaries actually say that there will be nine hubs in rural and regional communities, because there are nine regions that fall outside Melbourne, and eight hubs in metro Melbourne. We actually need to go into those communities and talk to the service providers, have a look at family violence incident rates and do the preparatory work to then put together a proposal for those communities to co-locate services within the hubs. We do not want — —

Mr D. O’BRIEN — So the 5 million is not likely to be going towards any sort of infrastructure at this point in time, I assume, from what you are saying?

Ms RICHARDSON — No, I do not believe so. It is actually in the outputs, not in the assets, as a line item. That is a pretty good indicator that it is funding for design. It is actually critically important work, but it is work that you have actually got to do a great deal of research for — you have to actually talk to all of the service providers and you have got to think very clearly about all the various models that do exist in Victoria, and then the actual location of the hubs becomes clearer as you make each and every one of those decisions.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Can I just ask: I know that there is a fair bit of data around, but do you have access to data on family violence incidents in rural and regional Victoria that you can provide to the committee, which is presumably on an LGA basis?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, in fact we do, and what that tells us, disturbingly, is that —

Mr D. O’BRIEN — It is higher — I know that, yes.

Ms RICHARDSON — of the top 10 LGAs with respect to family violence, all of those LGAs fall outside metropolitan Melbourne.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Would you be able to provide that on notice or at least direct us to where it is?

Ms RICHARDSON — Of course. It will be in here; it will be in my folder. In fact Morwell, or Latrobe Valley, topped the list. The last time the list was put together it had the highest incident rate of family violence. We know that — wow!

Mr D. O’BRIEN — If that could be tabled, as you have got it, that would be great given the time, rather than running through them all. That would be really good. Thanks, Ms Falkingham; that is great. Just continuing on that, there is only, I think, the one recommendation — 182 — that talks about rural and regional specifically. Can you give us an idea of the percentage of the total package that will be directed towards rural and regional Victoria?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. With respect to rural and regional, out of the 572, that is not limited to services within metropolitan Melbourne. For example, the housing blitz package will help victims of family violence in rural and regional areas. Also, in particular the case workers, who are designed to better navigate the system, which was a key recommendation of the royal commission report — the \$19 million there.

One of the barriers for victims of family violence living in rural and regional communities, one of the reasons that they are at higher risk of escalation of violence, is access to services and not being able to navigate or know what is available to them. Those navigators, that \$19 million of funds that are for navigators, as indicated in the royal commission report and in countless submissions to the royal commission as well, are about helping those high-risk groups in particular, and unfortunately women living in rural and regional communities do fall into that high-risk category. It is about ensuring that we can actually address their concerns. The hubs as well — I think it is important to note that 9 out of the 17 will be in rural and regional areas. I think that is important.

Also there are some specific initiatives designed to improve our prevention initiatives in rural and regional communities — so that \$2 million that we were talking about before and possible models that are in place in New Zealand and other countries. Those are the kinds of initiatives that we would be looking to put in place or to trial in rural and regional communities. The package is not exclusive. It does provide a range of services, but I think you can see contained within it the focus on specialist family violence services in particular — Safe Steps funding and the like — and all of that will help women living right across the state.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you, and I appreciate that a lot of it will be generic, covering both rural and metropolitan. I just move on to the CALD funding; you referred to it earlier. The 3.3 million that is listed on page 8 — how much of that is allocated to inTouch and who are the other providers that money will go to?

Ms RICHARDSON — So the 3.3 million that you have identified in the budget is about CALD service providers being able to address demand but also to put in place more counsellors, more interpreters and more support for victims of family violence from CALD communities. inTouch is a key service provider in the CALD family violence space, and actually they have also put in place some very innovative initiatives around engaging with communities using elders, if I can put it in that way — people who are connected into the community and are respected across the community — using those people to deliver prevention messages across CALD communities. This funding is specifically for demand in CALD communities. No doubt inTouch will be the significant beneficiary of that investment.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — They will get most of it or all of it? The 3.3?

Ms RICHARDSON — There needs to be and there is always a process that government, as you would be aware, puts in place as people tend to —

The CHAIR — Order! Dr Carling-Jenkins, until 3.45 p.m.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Thank you, Minister. It is quite unsettling, the new structure, isn't it, for you to switch from one conversation to the next?

Ms RICHARDSON — It is.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — I think you are coping very well. I wanted to commend you on the work that you have done over the last 12 months. As you know, I am a really strong supporter of this area, and it is great to see the whole-of-government strategy around family violence. I just wanted to very quickly follow up on BP3, page 16, around the prevention strategies for diverse communities. I know that you have answered a couple of questions on this already. I was going to ask a similar question, so I was very interested to learn about the funding going to designing and developing programs. As an academic I think that is fantastic. I think a lot of academics will be really supportive of that.

I specifically wanted to ask around victims with disability, since that is my area. One program, for example, that I am aware of that used to be run at Monash University at the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria was called the assessments of sexual knowledge, and it was designed for people with intellectual disability. This program prevented violence as well as enabling people with intellectual disability to articulate abuse, therefore preventing further violence by giving them the tools and the knowledge they needed. This clinic no longer runs because of lack of funds, which is probably why you have probably never heard of it. Is this the kind of strategy that you are looking to evaluate as part of this initiative — those really targeted programs?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, but last year in fact Women with Disabilities, the organisation, received \$400 000 worth of funding from our prevention initiatives, and that was because they had a range of programs,

a range of initiatives and a range of innovative ways of delivering the kinds of programs and initiatives that you are describing. This initiative is designed to build on that — on the work and the funding that was allocated last year — but also it is important that we think about how just generalist services in the specialist family violence services actually understand the way in which abuse of women with disabilities plays out, because it is not —

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — How it presents.

Ms RICHARDSON — It is not exactly the same, and the ways you have identified victims can articulate or respond to violence may be challenged for other reasons. Ensuring that we actually have prevention initiatives, which is where this 2 million sits, takes into consideration those challenges as well and is going to be critically important in the work that we do

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — That relates a lot to the workforce capacity issues as well, does it not?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Okay. Thank you, Minister, for clearing that up. I would like to now turn your attention to the housing blitz that you mentioned in your presentation and also in budget paper 3, page 8, and particularly talk around the models that you are looking at adopting there. I have got two questions on this: firstly, around the redevelopment of family violence refuges. My mother, just for a bit of background, used to work in the traditional refuges over two decades ago, so I am familiar with those traditional types of services, but I am sure that a lot has been developed in the last couple of decades, so what are you looking to achieve with this 800 000 over the next two years in this space?

Ms RICHARDSON — The tragedy is that for very many women staying safe at home is just not an option.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Absolutely.

Ms RICHARDSON — In the past of course it has fallen to the women's movement to put in place the refuges and safe houses for women and their children escaping violence. Over time there have been some innovations and some developments around refuges and in particular this core and cluster model, which I actually saw for myself in operation in South Australia, and I encourage you to have a look.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — I will.

Ms RICHARDSON — It actually establishes residential homes, but attached to those homes is a service where multiple agencies deliver support for victims of family violence. That ranges from accommodation, clearly, but also employment services, health services, counselling services and the like. What has happened as a consequence of that is that victims get back on their feet sooner. So it is a hub model, if you like, but it is around a refuge.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — It is a bit like the GP super clinics; it has services under one roof.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. It is still a secure facility. Its location obviously is not disclosed. It has on site some security systems as well and connection to police services to ensure that if the need arises, law enforcement officers can come and help victims. It is an innovation that has been in place for some time in South Australia, and it is something that this investment is seeking to further develop in Victoria.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Fantastic. Thank you very much, Minister. I really appreciate that. I will definitely look that up. The second question was around, in the same space, the accommodation for homelessness. That is obviously already a problem throughout the state without the added issue of family violence. I know, for example, in the area where my electorate office is in Wyndham there is no crisis accommodation for anybody, meaning that survivors are dispersed and displaced, so could you talk about this line item in terms of how that will solve this issue that arises quite often?

Ms RICHARDSON — We know, and the royal commission report highlights this as well, that family violence is the major reason for women seeking assistance from homeless support services, and the royal commission identified that in 14–15 there were in fact 1000 people who were unable to access emergency accommodation due to family violence. The \$25 million package is designed to construct 180 new units of crisis accommodation, and it will also upgrade existing accommodation. I understand tomorrow the housing

minister is coming to speak to you, but there is no doubt from the family violence royal commission report, and from what you hear right across the sector, that there is the need to invest significantly in housing support for victims of family violence.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Yes. Thank you very much, Minister.

Ms SHING — Thanks, Minister, for your presentation and for answering the questions under the pressure of the ever-present clock. I would like to take you to budget paper 3 again, page 8, and specifically to talk about information sharing. One of the issues which was raised in the course of numerous submissions as part of the inquiry, which has also been the subject of a lot of discussion in Gippsland around the sharing of information and the duplication that has to take place where victims and survivors of family violence need to tell their stories to numerous agencies and people multiple times, often before they can get part or all of a solution to the issues at hand.

The multi-agency risk assessment and safeguarding funding is one of the output initiatives in the whole-of-government response. I would be interested in an explanation as to the meaning of what this allocation of \$28.5 million is designed to achieve and how that is actually going to address the shortcomings and the recommendations as they appear in the commission report, and specifically recommendation 7. There is a lot in that so we have got a few minutes before you go onto the next one.

Ms RICHARDSON — I think I have got it noted. One of the key themes that is identified in the royal commission report is the siloing of services, and the place where the greatest danger lies in the siloing of services is in proper risk assessment and management. The group that clearly is most disadvantaged by our failure to coordinate agencies and to put in place proper risk assessments are obviously high-risk victims of family violence. It is not only the royal commission report that has identified this; the Luke Batty coronial inquest also talked about the fact that a great many agencies — three or four, I think — actually were aware of the threat that was posed to Luke, yet there was not a coordination to ensure that a proper response was put in place.

Again, in South Australia they have a multi-agency protection service. What that does is it is a bit like an emergency management service. Every day the equivalence of the L17s come in through the service. They are tracked, and a traffic light is put in place — so whether it is high risk, medium risk or low. But what you see at that service is a range of agencies, a range of government departments — so education, child protection, police and the like — all working and thinking about the risk that is posed by the incident that is brought before them. Then they can feed into the services and the like right across the state and call on those agencies to deliver the services that victims need.

That tracking of incidents of family violence is really critical, because what we know about family violence is that without intervention, violence escalates. It does not magically go away. At times as part of the common assessment framework or whatever risk assessment you put in place you see a pattern of behaviour, and that will then change the responses that you need to deliver.

Ms SHING — So as part of delivering that consolidated approach to information sharing, how is it possible to balance privacy considerations on the one hand with the need to understand most fulsomely or as fulsomely as possible what a risk is in any given circumstance? Because that is one of the things that has come up time and time again around a perceived lack of privacy on the one hand for victims, women and children predominantly, and particularly rural and regional communities. This is again one thing that I hear frequently in Gippsland — the L17 approach and that sort of response from services is often confined to the way in which one agency can deal with it because of the lack of capacity to share information for privacy reasons. What can you tell us about that?

Ms RICHARDSON — The fact that privacy has often trumped the safety of victims is of considerable concern. We know there is a recommendation in the royal commission report that calls on us to address the privacy act to ensure that we do not have ongoing a situation where concerns about privacy mean that we cannot deliver services. In other jurisdictions in Australia there are different privacy requirements and legislation that is in place. I am not sure that we will be able to lift those directly off the shelf, but no doubt there are models that we can put in place as a starting point.

Ms SHING — Sure. And what role would Victoria Police have in relation to oversight of a central, multi-agency information point as far as the sharing of information is concerned?

Ms RICHARDSON — In South Australia it was actually a police-led initiative, and they are at the centre, if you like, of the establishment of that. But they are actually wanting to step back from that and not be the lead agency or at the centre of that work and rather put family violence specialist services at the centre of the hub of the multi-agency protection service. All of these models, all of these conversations, all of these considerations need to be put before our steering committee, need to be put before our victims advisory council, so that we can actually make the right call. Also right across departments you have the challenge of differing information that is collected for differing reasons. There needs to be quite a bit of work done in this space if we are to use a multi-agency approach to decrease the risk of family violence and, importantly, deliver appropriate services.

Ms SHING — Thanks, Minister. Would be fair to say that the work of the family violence reform steering committee and also the victims advisory council, which will be chaired by Rosie Batty, will in fact continue to shape the way in which government responds to the family violence royal commission and to implement the recommendations?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. One of the things that has been clear throughout the failings, if you like, or why have we landed where we have landed with respect to family violence is that we have silenced victims. We are determined not to make that mistake as we are putting in place the 227 recommendations but also putting in place a reform structure to ensure that the work continues beyond the focus and attention that we have on family violence. Central to that is of course the victims advisory council. Rosie Batty has very kindly agreed to chair that group. Victims voices, as I said at the beginning of my presentation, have actually been the tipping point for our wider conversation about this issue, and Rosie Batty in particular. But when you talk to victims, you often get a very different sense about service delivery than you get from service providers. So one of the things that I am interested in is the way they audit through a victim survey in Tasmania the programs and initiatives that they have in place so that there is a continual feedback from victims about the service delivery.

So it seems an obvious point to make and a common-sense point that you would want to speak to victims about their experience of the system. Clearly if you have a broken system and you are putting in place new measures to address service delivery, you should be talking to those that are most reliant upon it. So we have set up the victims advisory council for that reason. We believe it needs to have an ongoing role and function. The victims' voices need to be part of this conversation, not just for the next 12 months but ongoing.

Ms SHING — Thank you. Minister, one of the things that has arisen in relation to family violence is not just the immediate need for proactive planning but also where we head to more broadly in tackling causes around gender inequality and the shortcomings there. I would like to get your views in relation to, again, budget paper 3, page 8, around achieving equality for Victorian women and the output initiatives there, in particular with a focus on the needs of diverse women, including Aboriginal women, women in regional Victoria and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. That is something you touched on as well with Mr O'Brien's question earlier.

Ms RICHARDSON — So the gender equality strategy that we are putting in place is not a one-size-fits-all strategy clearly. It will need to address the needs of differing communities. The fact of the matter is that there is no country or culture in the world that has actually delivered equality for women. However, we know that there are some cultural practices, for example, that are more harmful to women than others, and we cannot be shy about having those sorts of conversations as we develop a gender equality strategy but also as we put in place prevention initiatives designed to reduce the harm of family violence. So there is a need, with respect to diverse communities in particular, to give consideration to what will work and consideration to what has not worked in the past, and — —

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien, until 4.05 p.m.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you, Chair. Perhaps, Minister, it is pretty brutal in here, I know, but I might assist. If we could maybe continue a little bit along those lines, I think you said before about diverse community funding of 23 million, which was for — —

Ms SHING — Yes, that is where I was getting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is where you were at, which is for CALD and LGBTI outlets. Can you perhaps just give me an idea of how much of that will specifically go to the CALD communities.

Ms RICHARDSON — So the \$2 million for prevention — that includes CALD communities, Aboriginal communities and LGBTI communities. That is the initiative that we were talking about earlier as well — the \$2 million there. But there are specific programs — the 3.3 million that we were talking about in terms of funding for services like inTouch that are designed specifically for CALD victims of family violence. Again, CALD victims do fall into that high-risk category, so we do need to be very mindful of improving our service delivery for CALD victims of family violence.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And moving on, the very last line item in the package, victims' experience of the justice system at \$7.7 million. Can you just expand a bit on what that will actually deliver?

Ms RICHARDSON — Sure. So the — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So it is for women in prison, as I understand it, effectively.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. So as I said earlier, the victims' experience of the justice system is varied and at times quite disappointing when you reflect upon their experience. Clearly when we are reforming the justice system, we have to put in place measures that will actually address the concerns that victims have raised and put in place some innovative measures to ensure that the justice system is not a retraumatising experience for victims of family violence.

But there is also an opportunity to deliver programs within correctional settings. The rates of victims of family violence — who have experienced family violence in the past before — entering prison are catastrophically high, and there is an opportunity to deliver programs in that setting to improve outcomes for women.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just so I am clear though, this funding is specifically for those already in the correctional system. This is not just for victims who have to go through the process as a victim. This is for those in the corrections system.

Ms RICHARDSON — It does pick up some of the innovations, so the online intervention order process that is at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre. It does look at those kinds of initiatives to see how we could invest in those. So that obviously is going to support victims seeking an intervention order through the Magistrates Court.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. So some of it will not just be for those already in the corrections system, is that right?

Ms RICHARDSON — On reflecting the views and concerns of victims, you can see in jurisdictions in fact around Australia and around the world there are some innovative practices that you can put in place, and the intervention order — that is an online process that is running at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, which was announced last year. That is one of those measures that can improve — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is one of the things you mean by reforming the justice system.

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, that can improve the interaction between victims and the justice system.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — What else might be involved in reforming the justice system?

Ms RICHARDSON — Well, in fact the royal commission report talks about intervention order reform, and it does highlight, you know, the concerns about victims feeling that it really is not worth very much to take out an intervention order. So those are the kinds of measures that the royal commission talks about. But around the world they are looking at ways that non-adversarial, non-justice responses or perhaps justice responses that are run in partnerships with key services actually deliver better outcomes for women seeking support.

We have our justice system in an adversarial model, a rights-based model. It cannot necessarily do the work that needs to be done in responding to family violence. This gives us an opportunity to explore some of those options but also invest in some of the innovative measures that are already in place in the Magistrates Court and at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in particular.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just so that I am clear on this, the 7.7 million, or that line item, that is not just for women in the corrections system — women in prisons basically?

Ms RICHARDSON — No, that is right.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is right — it is a broader picture than that?

Ms FALKINGHAM — There are about 90 recommendations that relate to the corrections and the justice system and policing responses. One of it is the royal commission has made a recommendation around headquartering family violence supports within two years. So one of the things the Attorney-General is looking at is the best way of doing that, so that funding line item includes elements of some of the early design work that would need to go into that recommendation.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. I was looking at it, thinking it is 7.7 million and there are about 460 women in the prison system, and I could not work it out — thinking it was a lot of money going to them.

Ms RICHARDSON — No.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — But, no, that is not what it is.

Ms RICHARDSON — No. But right now the majority of victims of family violence are avoiding the justice system. They are taking alternative pathways.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, because it does not work out well for them.

Ms RICHARDSON — Precisely. And when we look at what are the services that are working for them — you know, the hub services and the way in which innovative services are delivered — they can form a part of a justice response in partnership with Justice, and that is the kind of work that we need to undertake.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are there examples around the world of how reforming a justice system has worked well that you can look at?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes, in fact, the ones that are regarded as world's best practice in a sense are those services that do not see the justice system as the centre or the hub of the response — they see the justice system as a partner in service response. For example, in risk assessment and whether an intervention order is or is not the way to go, having a justice response on its own we know does not necessarily reduce the risk to victims of family violence, whereas having, for example, a collection or a tribunal of people who are assessing risk and then making decisions about which pathway to take — and that might be a justice pathway, but it might be an alternative pathway — having that collection of expertise around the table, in terms of world's best practice, is seen as the way to go in responding to family violence.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are there any countries in particular that you would be looking to to get advice, that have taken a lead on this?

Ms RICHARDSON — There are some innovations in the UK, also in northern Europe. I had a look at the Red Hook centre — which the Neighbourhood Justice Centre was modelled on — in New York. Fundamentally, at its heart it is an understanding and a view that the adversarial model is not the best model or frame to resolve human conflict, and the rights-based model as well is something that can retraumatise victims. Those are the kinds of practices and models that we want to investigate and explore here. We already have the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in the City of Yarra. It is referred to in the royal commission report. It was built on the Red Hook court in New York. Those are the kinds of innovations in the justice space, but more broadly in the family violence area, that we need to investigate as part of this funding.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sure. In the last minute that I have got, can I quickly move onto men's behaviour change programs? Could you advise how many there are already operating in Victoria and — perhaps this information could be taken on notice — what the waiting lists are for each of those programs and what is being provided to address that? I am happy for you to take that one on notice, if you like.

Ms RICHARDSON — When you look at men's behaviour change programs, it is kind of an illustration of a broken system, because you have men's behaviour change programs that are voluntary delivered by the

Minister for Families and Children, you have a men's behaviour change program in the corrections setting that is delivered by the Minister for Corrections, then you have mandated programs from courts which are delivered by the Attorney-General. It is just a real hotchpotch of programs being delivered across the system.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could we get them on notice?

Ms RICHARDSON — It is true to say that there is demand pressure on each of those programs and there is important investment being made to address that demand as part of this budget.

The CHAIR — Minister, just for Hansard, can you just confirm, yes, that you are happy to provide that information on notice to the committee?

Ms RICHARDSON — Yes. Just as I highlighted, there are different ministers who are responsible for different component parts.

The CHAIR — Whatever you are able to furnish, that would be excellent.

Ms RICHARDSON — We will take that up.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance: the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Honourable Fiona Richardson, MP; and Ms Falkingham, Mr McDonnell, Ms Griffiths and Mr Ticchi. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. A written response should be provided within 14 calendar days of that request.

Witnesses withdrew.