

Safe Homes, Safe Families: Next steps



A MAJORITY LIBERAL GOVERNMENT WILL:

- Commit to ongoing funding for Tasmania's "*nation-leading*" Family Violence Action Plan – next stage plan
- \$1.5 million immediate boost to meet increasing demand
- New offence of "persistent family violence"
- Court declarations for persistent and repeat offenders
- Project O – funding generational change



Investing in Tasmanians in need

A commitment to continuing Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan

Tasmania's first comprehensive Family Violence Action Plan – *Safe Homes, Safe Families* - was released in August 2015 and was described as "nation-leading" by then Australian of the Year and family violence campaigner, Rosie Batty.

The Liberal Government committed an additional \$26 million to 18 new and direct actions to address family violence in Tasmania.

This additional funding for the Family Violence Action Plan was allocated over four years, ending 30 June 2019.

All actions in the Family Violence Action Plan are underway, and we have built on the Plan by introducing a number of new actions.

We will continue to take a responsive and evidence-based approach to family violence, listening to emerging issues and learning from new evidence as we plan the next stage.

The advice to government from the Family Violence Consultative Group is clear that we must –

- continue the delivery of actions already in place;
- consolidate those actions and evaluate their implementation and long-term impact to inform future options; and
- address immediate increased demand.

In line with that advice, a wide-ranging cross-agency evaluation of all actions under the Family Violence Action Plan will commence immediately to see what's working, what needs improving or better targeting.

That work will ensure we have a comprehensive way forward for the next five-year Action Plan.

The second stage of Family Violence will commence from 2019-20.

Our achievements

All actions under our Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020 are underway, including:

- ✓ Safe Families Coordination Unit open
- ✓ Safe Choices established
- ✓ Respectful Relationships program in all government schools
- ✓ Support for national campaign
- ✓ Joined Our Watch
- ✓ White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program in our Agencies
- ✓ More support for children affected by family violence through schools and Child & Family Centres
- ✓ Support for children in non-government schools
- ✓ More counselling services for children and youth
- ✓ Additional counselling services for adults
- ✓ More crisis accommodation
- ✓ More supported housing options
- ✓ Strengthened legislative responses
- ✓ Extended legal assistance
- ✓ More police prosecutors
- ✓ Extended forensic medical examinations
- ✓ Training of frontline staff in Education Department
- ✓ Practical supports to keep women safe in their own homes
- ✓ Practice Guide
- ✓ Work with Aboriginal community



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\$1.5 million to meet increased demand

There has been a significant rise in the reported incidence of family violence following the release of the Government's family violence strategy.

The latest Tasmania Police Corporate Report indicates that the number of reported family violence incidents and arguments for the 2017-18 year (to the end of November 2017) was 2221. This represents a 12% increase for the same period during the previous year (1983) and a 14% increase on the three-year average (1942).

This has resulted in increased demand on services, and an increase in historical and complex family violence cases that require more intensive interventions and responses. It demonstrates the need for further immediate investment.

The introduction of the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme is also expected to result in greater demand for support.

A re-elected Hodgman majority Liberal Government will immediately boost the existing level of funding for the Family Violence Action Plan over the next two years by \$750,000 per annum.

This funding will provide –

- Increased resources for the flagship Safe at Home Coordination Unit to address significance increases in demand;
- An additional Safe at Home Police Prosecutor;
- Additional staffing and extended hours for the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service;
- Employment of an additional Safe at Home legal practitioner in the North-West; and
- Employment of an additional Court Support and Liaison Officer in the south of the State.



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More crisis accommodation

The new Hobart Women's Shelter, to be opened shortly, will expand capacity by 30 per cent. In addition, under Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan, a pool of 50 homes are now available through the *Rapid Rehousing* program, for women exiting violent relationships and crisis accommodation.

However, current demand on emergency and crisis accommodation and housing services strongly supports additional investment in new or expanded programs to support victims of family violence.

Planning will commence immediately for a new additional women's crisis shelter providing emergency accommodation for women and children in the south, with associated mapping of need for family-style crisis accommodation in the North and North-West.

Targeting Persistent Family Violence Offenders

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will create a new offence of "persistent family violence".

Family violence offences can occur over a lengthy period of time. Victims can spend months, even years, under the control of a violent, abusive partner, subject to a range of offences from emotional and economic abuse to serious sexual assault. Such offending can be unreported for some time, with victims too scared to speak out.

The impact on victims can be devastating and long-lasting.

In such circumstances, victims can find it difficult to recall specific details of each individual offence. This can make it very hard for prosecuting authorities to prove individual offences, and can lead to charges being greatly reduced. In such cases, sentences sometimes do not reflect the gravity of an offender's conduct.

To address this issue, the new offence of "persistent family violence" modelled on other continuing offences in Tasmanian law, will be created.

To prove such an offence, prosecutors would need to establish three unlawful acts have occurred, without the need to prove exact dates or circumstances. In addition, other abuse suffered can be admitted generally as part of the offence.

This new, nation-leading offence will allow courts to take into account the full extent of an abusive relationship.

Courts will also be given the power to declare repeat offenders as persistent family violence offenders.



Investing in Tasmanians in need

Persistent Family Violence Offender Declarations

Many family violence offenders repeatedly offend against both the same and successive partners. It is crucial these offenders are easily identifiable both to address their behaviour as well as ensure appropriate measures can be put in place to protect their victims.

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will give the Courts the power to declare repeat offenders as persistent family violence offenders.

Such a declaration could have wide ranging implications and be relevant to whether an offender is –

- Admitted to bail or parole in the future;
- Permitted to possess firearms or hold a firearms licence;
- Required to undertake certain programs or therapy while in custody; or
- Abide by certain conditions or remain under supervision while in the community.

Project O – funding generational change

A re-elected majority Hodgman Liberal Government will provide funding of \$150,000 per annum for three years to Project O, to deliver a family violence primary prevention project, driving generational and attitudinal change by backing rural young women to become change-makers in their community on the North-West Coast.

The project will provide workshops on mentoring, leadership, empowerment and digital inclusion for at-risk young women who have experienced or witnessed family violence.

The project will be delivered by award-winning *BIGHART*.

Cost

The additional cost of this policy is \$1,950,000 over three years.