

Eastern Metropolitan  
Regional Family Violence Partnership

# Strategic Plan

2020-2024



A society in which all communities and  
people are free from family violence.

We acknowledge and thank the speaking out advocates with lived experience of family violence whose voices have informed this strategic plan

- as always, victim survivors are at the centre of our work.



This word cloud was produced from the discussion that took place between victim survivors at the Speaking Out consultation.



The Eastern Regional Family Violence Partnership acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we provide our services. We pay our respects to Elders and community members past and present.

## Family Violence

Family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person's safety or wellbeing. It includes exposing a child to these behaviours, as well as their effects and impacts. Family violence presents across a spectrum of risk, ranging from subtle exploitation of power imbalances, through to escalating patterns of abuse over time.<sup>1</sup>

While both men and women can be perpetrators or victim survivors of family violence, overwhelmingly, perpetrators are men, who largely perpetrate violence against their current or former female partners and children. However, family violence can occur in a range of ways across different relationship types and communities including elder abuse, parental abuse, sibling abuse, child abuse and in relationships with other relatives, in-laws, kinship networks, carer and family-like relationships and in same sex relationships. As defined in section 5 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, family violence is a behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour:

- is physically or sexually abusive; or
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- is economically abusive; or
- is threatening; or
- is coercive; or
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member of another person; or
- behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in these ways.



## Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour or activity that makes the victim feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened. It is sexual activity that the person has not consented to and refers to a broad range of sexual behaviours, including the use or threat of violence to force another person to engage in a sexual activity against their will.

Sexual assault commonly occurs within the context of family violence and is underpinned by the same drivers of violence against women and often requires a service response by the same organisations or systems.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The State of Victoria, 2020. Family Violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment Framework: Practice Guides.

<sup>2</sup> The State of Victoria, 2017. Victoria State Government Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework December 2017.

## Statement on Language

This Strategic Plan refers to people who have experienced family violence as victim survivors. We are guided by state policy and terminology which has been shaped by members of the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council. We recognise that not every person who has experienced or is experiencing family violence identifies with this term. Our use of the term acknowledges the strength and resilience shown by victim survivors impacted by family violence.

The Strategic Plan uses the term perpetrator to describe people who choose to use family violence, acknowledging the preferred term for Aboriginal people and some communities is a person who uses violence. The term perpetrator is not appropriate when referring to adolescents who use family violence and women who use force in defense. The decision to use the term perpetrator is also based on a desire for consistency with the state policy that guides our work.

### Victim Survivor

*Our use of the term acknowledges the strength and resilience shown by victim survivors impacted by family violence*



## What do we mean by the Family Violence System?

The RFVP Strategic Plan 2020-2024 is aligned with the family violence workforce model articulated in *Building from Strength: 10 Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*. This model describes a tiered system including specialist services who spend 90 percent or more of their time working with victim survivors or perpetrators, or engaged in primary prevention activities to workforces that intersect with family violence.

### **TIER 1: SPECIALIST FAMILY VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PRIMARY PREVENTION PRACTITIONERS**

These specialists spend 90 percent or more of their time working with victim survivors or perpetrators, or engaged in primary prevention activities. Tier 1 practitioners and teams may form part of larger organisations that provide a range of services, or they may be employed in stand-alone services. What they have in common as practitioners is that their sole or major focus is on family violence (and/or sexual assault), or on primary prevention.

### **TIER 2: WORKERS IN CORE SUPPORT OR INTERVENTION AGENCIES**

Responding to family violence is not the primary focus of these workforces, but they spend a significant proportion of their time responding to victim survivors or perpetrators of violence. This includes Victoria Police, courts, legal agencies and court services, Corrections Victoria and Child Protection, and other agencies including Child FIRST and Integrated Family Services who work with many families who may be experiencing or are at risk of family violence.



### **TIER 3: WORKERS IN MAINSTREAM SERVICES AND NON-FAMILY VIOLENCE SPECIFIC AGENCIES**

While their core work is not family violence, they work in sectors that respond to the impacts of family violence (e.g. housing, alcohol and other drugs, mental health), or in an area where early signs of people experiencing or perpetrating family violence can be noted. This includes the health-care system (GPs, community health, hospitals), therapeutic services (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, counsellors, family therapists) and agencies that support financial security, such as Centrelink.

### **TIER 4: WORKERS IN UNIVERSAL SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS**

Because they interact with children and families in their day-to-day roles (in organisations like schools, childcare centres and faith-based institutions), these workers are likely to have regular and extended contact with victim survivors or perpetrators of violence. Across the system there are specialist family violence (Tier 1) practitioners embedded within Tier 2 and 3 settings, including child protection, courts and police. Similarly, specialist primary prevention workers (Tier 1) will work in settings across all four tiers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The State of Victoria, 2017. Victoria State Government *Building from Strength: 10 Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*, p. 32.

## List of Commonly used acronyms in the Family Violence System

ACCO – Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations  
CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse  
CASA – Centre Against Sexual Assault  
CIS – Child Information Sharing Scheme  
CoP – Communities of Practice  
DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services  
DWWic – Domestic Violence Victoria  
EMR – Eastern Metropolitan Region  
FSV – Family Safety Victoria  
FVISS – Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme  
FVPA – Family Violence Protection Act  
FVRIC – Family Violence Regional Integration Committee  
FV – Family Violence  
IC – Implementation Committee  
IFV – Identifying Family Violence  
LGA – Local Government Area  
MARAM – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework  
PSA – Principal Strategic Advisor  
PVAW – Preventing Violence Against Women  
RAMP – Risk Assessment and Management Panels  
RFVP – Regional Family Violence Partnership  
RCFV – Royal Commission into Family Violence  
TFER – Together for Equality and Respect  
TOD – The Orange Door  
SLG – Systems Leadership Group



## Leadership Message

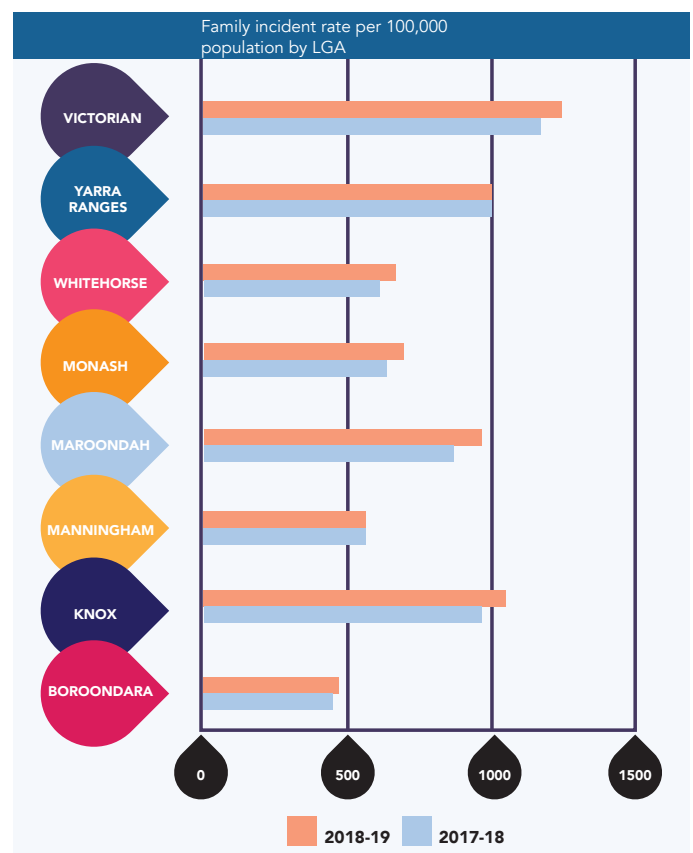
The Regional Family Violence Partnership (RFVP) is excited to share its bold new strategy, as we continue to work in partnership across seven Local Government Areas to realise our collective vision: a society in which all communities and people are free from family violence. Together, we seek to achieve this through our commitment to four bold strategic priorities and seize the unique window of opportunity the next four years offer. Our strategy reflects both the Victorian and National policy environment, the input of our talented and visionary partners, and crucially, centres the lived experience of victim survivors. Our strategy signifies our unified commitment to working openly and collaboratively while remaining adaptive to an evolving evidence base, enhancing workforce capability and integrating data to inform client-centred decision making and monitor our success. We know it is vital that we deliver safe and positive outcomes for those who are counting on us the most.

For the first time, and in collaboration with RFVP members and victim survivors, we've introduced a set of values that will underpin our approach to delivering on our strategic priorities. Our actions will always be critical, and it is how we deliver on those actions that will ensure our leadership and influence best facilitates local innovation and statewide reform.

We thank and acknowledge all partners and community members for all they've so generously contributed and look forward to our continued work, in transforming society so that all communities and people are free from family violence.

## Our History

The RFVP provides leadership, advocacy and specialist expertise to strengthen, integrate and improve the family violence system and help end family violence across the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR). The EMR covers the two Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) areas of Inner Eastern Melbourne and Outer Eastern Melbourne encompassing the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Boorondara, Monash, Manningham, Whitehorse, Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges. The RFVP has representation from specialist family violence services as well as broader cross-sector organisations and alliances whose work intersects with family violence response, early intervention and prevention. RFVP members are leaders active in strengthening the family violence system and ending family violence in the EMR.

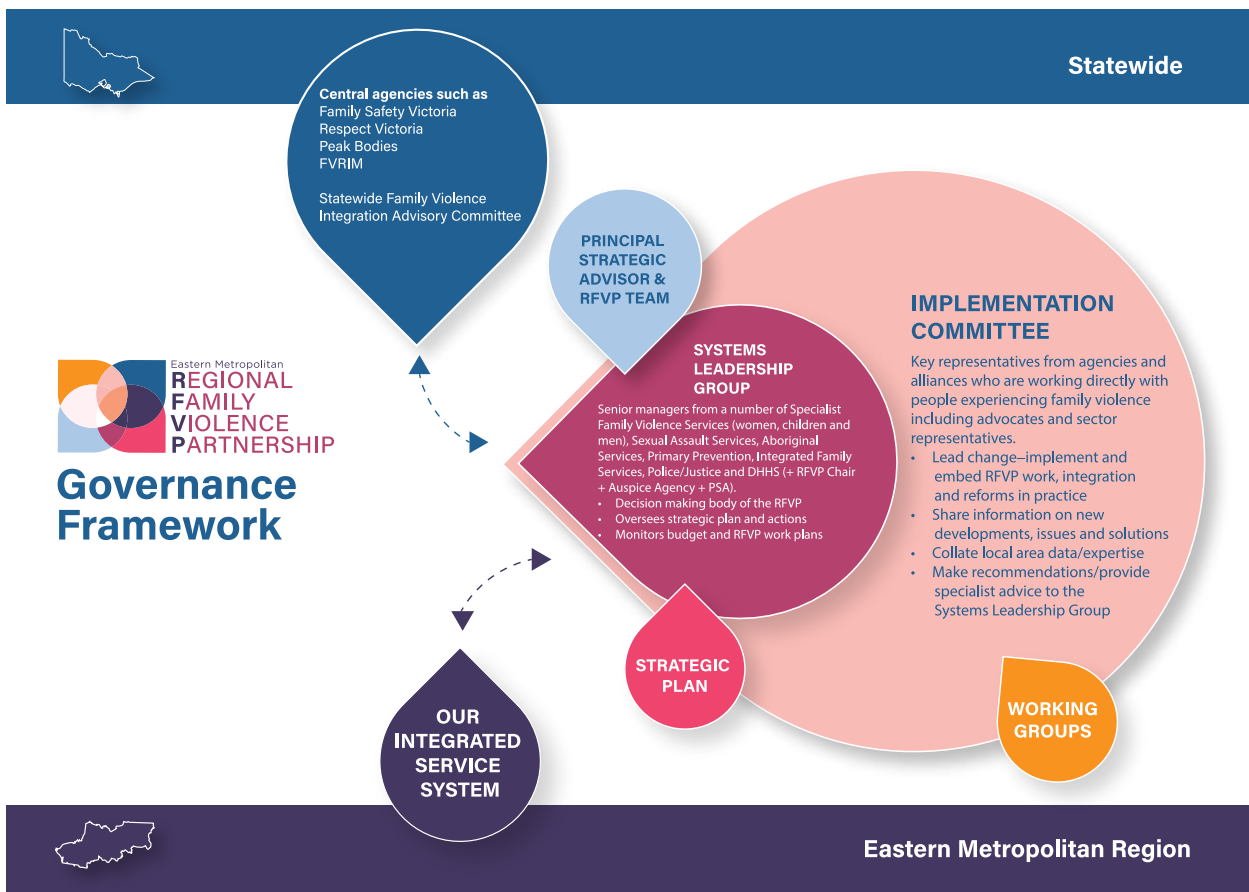


While similar to state averages, the prevalence of family violence in the EMR is predominantly increasing at higher rates than the state average. For more information see: <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal>

Established in 2007 under the Victorian family violence reforms, Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs) provided a governance structure to improve the integration between services responding to family violence in the local regions.

The RCFV, which concluded in 2016, dramatically changed the landscape of Victoria's family violence system. The RCFV provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity to examine our system from the ground up and put victim survivors at the centre of family violence reform. Ending Family Violence: Victoria's plan for change is the Victorian Government's plan to deliver on all 227 recommendations.

In early 2019, the previous governance body of the RFVP, the Executive Committee, unanimously decided to strengthen our regional integration work by embedding a new governance framework. The work of the partnership is today driven by the Systems Leadership Group and the Implementation Committee (see diagram below).





## Our Planning Context

The RFVP is one of 14 FVRICs that exist across Victoria. As local system governance structures, these partnerships are integral to the success of the Victorian Government's plan to implement the recommendations from the RCFV outlined in Ending Family Violence: Victoria's plan for change.

Since its release, Ending Family Violence has seen an unprecedented breadth and pace of family violence reform and transformation across Victoria, with initiatives set to continue over several years.

The RFVP is well placed to inform, influence and shape the priorities and directions of the statewide family violence reform agenda as the Victorian Government implements initiatives of Ending Family Violence across Victoria, including the EMR.

The RCFV acknowledged the inherent value of regional integration. Recommendation 193 recognised that FVRICs should be part of the governance structure 'for implementing the Commission's recommendations and overseeing systemic improvements in family violence policy' (RCFV Summary, 2016, p.97).

The RFVP's unique value proposition to the Victorian Government and Ending Family Violence is threefold.<sup>4</sup>

- Local system focus. We have an unwavering focus on the family violence system as it exists and is understood in the specific geographic and system (or place-based) contexts of the EMR.
- Family violence lens. We maintain resolute focus on evidence-based understandings of family violence in our accountability to the diverse experiences, choices, safety and long-term recovery of victim survivors, and by keeping perpetrators squarely in view through an integrated system approach.
- Across all workforces. We are strongly focused on reaching into and building the capacity and capability of all workforces in sectors that comprise the family violence system in the EMR, especially in achieving more consistency in family violence risk literacy.



# Developing the Strategic Plan

Development of the RFVP Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 took place over a ten-month period, beginning with series of workshops in 2019 in consultation with the partnership and engaging with victim survivors through the Speaking Out program.

The strategic plan fits within and complements the local and statewide policy context as indicated below.

## NATIONAL CONTEXT

- *National Plan to Reduce Violence against women and their children 2012-2022 (2011) and its Fourth Action Plan 2019*

## VICTORIAN CONTEXT

- *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change (2016) and its three-year rolling action plans*
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 and Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018, which have enabled the creation of the Family Violence Information Scheme and facilitated a revised common risk management and assessment framework known as MARAM, both currently being implemented across Victoria*
- *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (Family Violence Agreement 2018-2028)*
- *Building from Strength: 10 Year Industry Plan for family Violence Prevention and Response (2017) and its three-year rolling action plans*
- *Free from Violence: Victoria's Strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women (2017)*
- *Safe and Strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy (2016)*
- *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children (2016)*
- *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018, and the establishment of Respect Victoria as an independent statutory authority focused on primary prevention*
- *Gender Equality Bill (2020) with the Gender Equality Act expected to take effect in 2021*



In this period of reform we have seen the family violence sector in a state of rapid change. While we are committed to long-term objectives we also acknowledge that this view may change as a result of policy and local variations. A mid-term review of this strategic plan is scheduled for July 2022.

## Strategic Plan

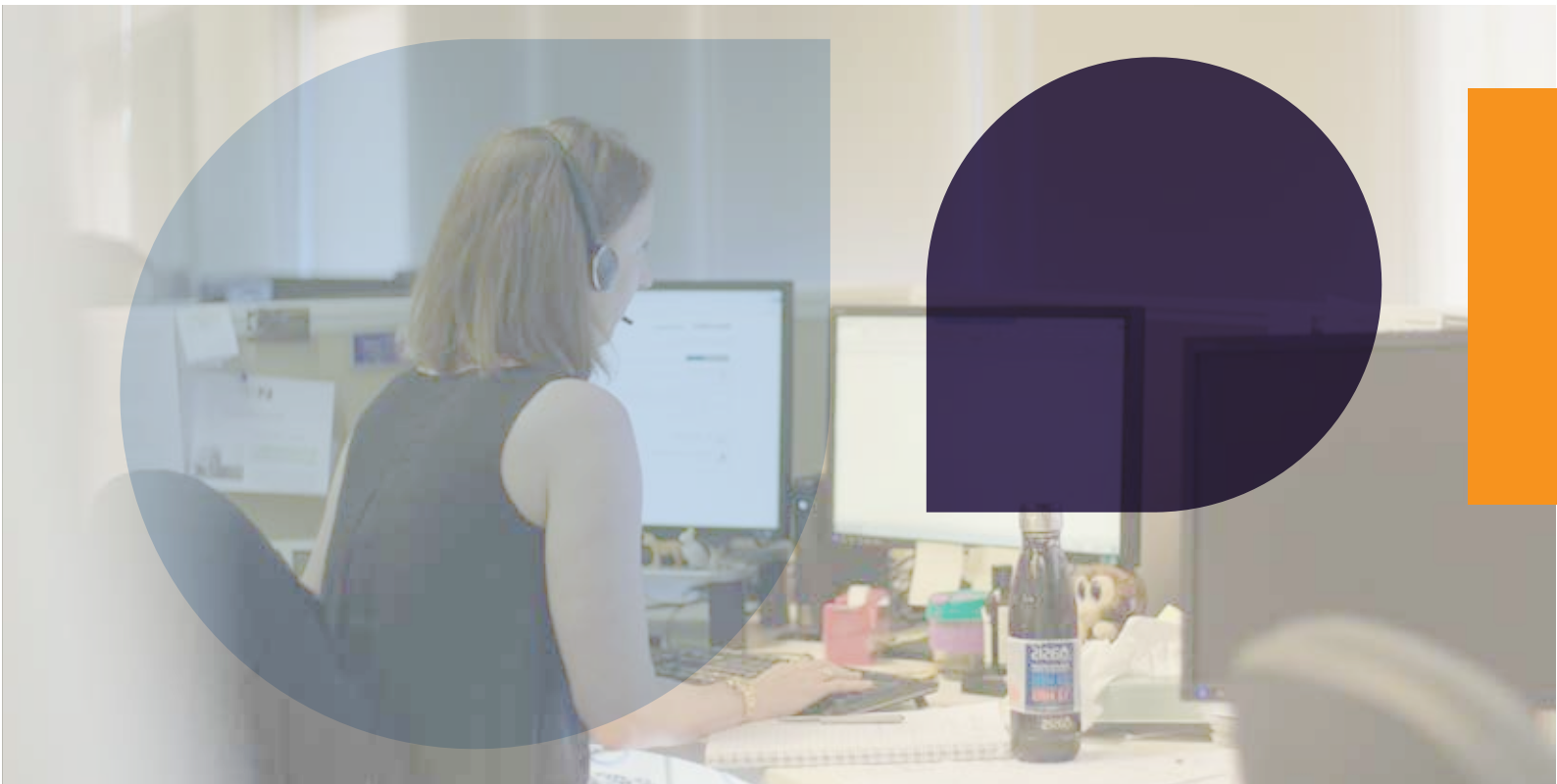
**Our vision:** A society in which all communities and people are free from family violence.

**Why we exist:** We exist to integrate and improve the local family violence system. We do this by providing specialist expertise and leadership to the local family violence system, supporting workforces and communities to transform family violence, and influencing and advocating for positive change.

### Our stakeholders:

- Individuals – All people affected by family violence in our communities – victim survivors who are currently experiencing violence, victim survivors who are recovering from family violence, and people who use violence.
  - o So we will: Identify priority issues and opportunities for system integration and improvement and centre victim survivor experiences in our system thinking and response. We will work together to increase the safety of victim survivors, including children and work to increase the visibility and accountability of people who use violence, ensuring they are appropriately engaged and connected across the service system.
- Workforces in our region – All those who work with and identify family violence in their clients and colleagues.
  - o So we will: Drive and embed practice change and encourage innovation for system integration and improvement.
- Communities – General public with a duty of care to recognise and respond to family violence.
  - o So we will: Influence positive change in attitudes, strengthen connections to raise awareness of family violence across the community and work to build the capacity of communities to respond with belief and understanding to victim survivors.





### Our values:

- Leadership – clarity, focus, continuous improvement
  - o So we will: Contribute in the best interests of the system, listen without judgement, enact the RFVP values and take ownership.
- Accountability – justice, integrity, consistency
  - o So we will: Be accountable to each other and be accountable to the experiences, safety and choices of victim survivors of family violence, and also to keeping those who choose to use family violence firmly in view.
- Safety – cultural safety, trauma-informed, respect
  - o So we will: Prioritise the safety of all our stakeholders, adopt a traumainformed lens in our work and listen with compassion. We will maintain cultural safety for Aboriginal organisations and communities partnering with us, and uphold their knowledge, self-determination and leadership in Aboriginal family violence recovery, response, early intervention and prevention.
- Access and Equity – inclusion, empowerment, critical thinking
  - o So we will: Welcome and elevate a range of voices, opinions and opportunities, acknowledge the complex and diverse nature of a person's experience and analyse power systems and structures.
- Collaboration – transparency, trust, relationships
  - o So we will: Have open conversations about opportunities, supporting work towards our vision, celebrating and showcasing collaborative practice.
- Creativity - innovation, responsiveness, solutions focus
  - o So we will: Be open to trying new ways of working and build on our strengths.

## Our strategic priority areas

### 1. Leadership and Influence

By providing effective strategic leadership and specialist expertise we support the family violence system to work collaboratively towards our common vision of a society in which all communities and people are free from family violence. Without leadership and influence, we miss the opportunity to impact family violence in ways that are systemic and transformative.

#### The RFVP will:

- Demonstrate the values of the RFVP and provide regional leadership and expertise on improving family violence responses and driving implementation of local strategic priorities.
- Work collaboratively and share information within our communities, regionally and at a statewide level as we work towards our shared vision of a society in which all communities and people are free from violence.



### 2. Workforce development

An engaged and confident workforce can ensure family violence is prevented, identified early and given an effective response at any point where a service user presents in the system. Our workforce is broadening and we need to ensure we engage with new and emerging workers and fields of practice. Prioritising and encouraging the building of workforce capacity and capability allows for all those responding to family violence to feel heard.

#### The RFVP will:

- Undertake capacity building activities with practitioners, leaders and community members across all workforce tiers ensuring our initiatives meet identified needs.
- Build and maintain common understanding of family violence in workforces but also within our communities (the true coal face of behaviour change and cultural shift).
- Align local area workforce priorities to support implementation of statewide workforce reform initiatives.

### 3. System Integration

Central to all we are aiming to do is the system connections we need to build, strengthen and maintain across a broad range of workforces. To move truly towards a mature system integration model we need to strengthen the key drivers that facilitate and enhance integration. This not only aids the effective implementation of key cross-sectoral reform pieces (e.g. MARAM and The Orange Door) but will also provide a more robust and less traumatic response for service users

#### The RFVP will:

- Understand and effectively communicate the complexity of our region's family violence system.
- Identify systemic barriers to successful statewide reform implementation in our region, and undertake targeted work to support initiatives to become embedded at a system level.
- Support a regional understanding of, readiness for, and effective interface for the implementation of TOD.



### 4. Data and knowledge

An effective partnership embeds an evidence-based approach to family violence prevention, response and recovery, and uses our collective knowledge and data in order to achieve maximum impact. This is clear in our decision making, our agenda and our agility when responding to a changing environment.

#### The RFVP will:

- Develop capacity and capability to contribute, analyse, understand and use data for informed strategic decision making.
- Establish a framework that can help demonstrate the impact of our system integration and improvement efforts, and show progress towards achieving our vision of a society in which all communities and people are free from family violence.
- Introduce an initiative or mechanism that can capture the client journey as they move through the local family violence system to understand local area needs as well as areas for system improvement.