



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## Royal Commission lays the foundations for action to end family violence in Victoria

**MELBOURNE – Wednesday 30 March 2016**

Women's Health Victoria welcomes the report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Victorian Government's commitment to implement the recommendations in full.

In particular, Women's Health Victoria is pleased that the Royal Commission has recommended a stand-alone strategy – and dedicated funding – for prevention of family violence. 'The Royal Commission has acknowledged that, until now, prevention programs have been piecemeal and underfunded,' said Rita Butera, Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria.

While the Royal Commission has not specified who should have overarching responsibility for implementing the prevention strategy, Ms Butera believes it is important that this function sit outside government. 'An independent state-based body with dedicated resourcing and specialist expertise in violence prevention and gender equity will ensure that prevention receives the attention it deserves,' she said. 'We need increased investment in prevention to reduce costs in the long-term and ensure we do not create another generation of women and children whose lives are overshadowed by violence.'

The statewide network of women's health services is an essential part of the picture on prevention. 'Women's health services have been at the forefront of violence prevention for more than a decade. The Government should harness the specialist expertise and infrastructure of women's health services across the state and work with us to scale up existing prevention and gender equity work,' Ms Butera said.

The Royal Commission has recognised that prevention strategies should aim to dismantle harmful attitudes towards women, promote gender equality and encourage respectful relationships. The Government's forthcoming gender equality strategy is a critical platform for progressing this work and must set out a long-term, comprehensive and coordinated approach to promoting gender equality across all walks of life.

The Royal Commission has also recognised the value of workplace-based prevention programs, like Women's Health Victoria's *Take a Stand against Domestic Violence: it's everyone's business*. 'Take a Stand uses the workplace as a setting to change attitudes and cultures that support violence against women, and gives people the knowledge and skills to speak up against domestic violence,' Ms Butera said.

Women's Health Victoria urges the Government to act quickly to develop the recommended 10 Year Family Violence Action Plan, in collaboration with the family violence sector, including women's health services. 'The Royal Commission's report lays the foundations for concerted action to prevent and respond to family violence. Urgent work is now required to bring the recommendations to life.'



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**About Women's Health Victoria**

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, state-wide women's health promotion, information and advocacy service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV works collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants.

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