

POLICY PAPER

EFFECTIVE PRIMARY PREVENTION FUNDING MODELS

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INTRODUCTION

Preventing family violence, sexual violence and all forms of gendered violence requires sustained and adequate investment. However, the current approach to funding limits the capacity of organisations to meet ongoing costs, retain expertise and deliver long-term change.

The purpose of this paper is to outline possible alternative funding models to strengthen the sustainability and impact of primary prevention initiatives to address family, sexual and gendered violence. It highlights evidence-based investment approaches for funders, including government, as well as the wider primary prevention sector.

This paper aligns with Respect Victoria's report [Maintain the Momentum: Three Yearly Report to Parliament on the Progress of Prevention 2022 - 2024](#) which provides recommendations to the Victorian Government for dedicated and enduring funding to support prevention, and to identify and leverage funding sources and approaches to prevention that promote coordination and sustainability.

Key messages

- Current models for funding prevention of family, sexual and gendered violence are insufficient and do not reflect the long-term nature of this work.
- This paper offers 3 alternative funding models:
 - Long-term investment frameworks
 - Designated funding
 - Pooled or braided funding.
- These models should be actioned in tandem for further impact.
- No matter the funding model, investment in prevention of family, sexual and gendered violence must be long-term, sustainable and collaborative to adequately address this national crisis.

CURRENT FUNDING ENVIRONMENT

Despite welcome investment in addressing family, sexual and gendered violence in Victoria, funding for primary prevention work continues to be short-term and less than what is needed to meet demand and achieve meaningful and long-term change.

The last modelling has found that family violence costs Victoria an estimated \$5.3 billion per year (1).

However, only an estimated \$43.3 million is invested yearly in prevention by the Victorian Government.¹

The Victorian Government has demonstrated strong bipartisan commitment to addressing family violence and all forms of violence against women, however, current investment approaches often prioritise short-term, programmatic funding. A shift towards long-term, sustainable and collaborative investment is required to adequately address all forms of gendered violence in our communities.

The Victorian Government has made progress in moving some programs to longer-term funding arrangements (approx. 3–4 years), however in order to make positive change, prevention activities should be funded for at least five years, aligning with the evidence that it takes more than five years to see population-level positive impacts (7, 9). This is particularly relevant for community-led prevention work where community-led organisations rely on lapsing funding bids and programmatic funding to maintain their position in the prevention system.

For a whole of community problem, we also need a whole of community response. Prevention requires investment from a diverse range of sources, including governments at every level, and the private and philanthropic sectors.

Supporting prevention over the long term means the entire Victorian prevention system is supported to do the important work of addressing the national crisis of family, sexual and gendered violence.

For more detail on the state of current prevention investment please see Appendix A: Characteristics of prevention funding models and [Maintain the Momentum: Three Yearly Report to Parliament on the Progress of Prevention 2022 - 2024](#).

¹ It is not possible to calculate the precise amount of direct investment in prevention from the Victorian Government. However, an estimate of \$130 million over 2022–2024 was presented in [Maintain the Momentum, Respect Victoria's](#)

[Three Year Report to Parliament](#). This was drawn from publicly available information (predominately state budget papers) and verified with Family Safety Victoria.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Short-term funding cycles

Prevention work is often funded in the short-term within annual budget cycles that follow fixed political terms, and this can create uncertainty for those being funded and impacting the continuity and effectiveness of prevention initiatives to demonstrate long-term impact (2, 5).

The consequences of short-term funding, include:

- high staff turnover and loss of skills and expertise from organisations and programs
- disruptions to program implementation and community engagement
- lack of time to build and sustain relationships and trust with communities
- difficulty evaluating or demonstrating evidence, outcomes and impact within short timeframes
- time and resources are diverted away from the work to bid for new or renewed funding (2, 8).

Under resourcing

Victoria has made significant progress in primary prevention, yet it is not funded at a level commensurate with the scale and complexity of the problem (2) – here nor anywhere else in Australia.

Organisations are forced to stretch limited resources to try and meet community demand, with many relying on staff taking on additional responsibilities, working unpaid overtime or resourcing work through volunteer support.

Project-based funding

Primary prevention funding remains predominantly project-based and tied to the delivery of specific programs or initiatives (2). While appropriate in certain scenarios, project-based funding does not often allow prevention organisations to engage in strategic whole-of-organisation work including, long-term planning, responses to emerging issues or inquiries, cross-sector collaboration or importantly developing new project pitches or budget bids which are essential for sustaining the kind of durable community change outcomes desired by violence prevention work (6). Evaluations are increasingly funded as a core and welcome component of many prevention programs. However, project-based funding for evaluation often prioritises the collection of short-term, quantitative data over longer-term qualitative data that captures changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours over time.

Project based funding can create insecurity for organisations who without ongoing core funding cannot sustain their staffing or fulfil their organisational priorities.

INNOVATIVE FUNDING MODELS

Adequately resourcing primary prevention in the long term requires sufficient decision-making processes, investment and cross-sector collaboration. The following models should be blended, combined or stacked for further stability and sustainability of prevention funding.

Long-term investment frameworks

Long-term investment frameworks are decision making frameworks that support governments to make upfront investments in initiatives where the impacts or outcomes may only be visible over a longer period.

When implemented effectively, primary prevention can improve outcomes for individuals by stopping violence before it starts while simultaneously slowing future expenditure by reducing demand on response services (10). However, government funding decisions are often tied to annual budget cycles and specific departmental priorities, which tend to favor innovation or short-term outcomes.

In Victoria, this has been partially addressed through the introduction of the Early Intervention Investment Framework in the 2021–22 Budget, a framework where existing funding is justified when the activity can generate long-term impact and/or savings. This demonstrates the Victorian Government's commitment to investing in interventions that reduce more significant downstream costs for government.

Our Watch has supported this proposal in the context of ending gendered violence in their [2026–27 Federal Budget Submission](#). They note that a Primary Prevention of Gender-Based Violence Investment Framework would provide guidance to agencies on modelling fiscal effects of prevention work and the long-term benefits of prevention activities (11).

Primary prevention is a powerful way to avoid harm and the costs associated with that harm, delivering strong economic benefits. With increasing pressures on Victoria's response services, greater upfront investment in primary prevention through a long-term Investment Framework dedicated to Primary Prevention could reduce demand for response services and lower overall government expenditure.

Case study: Proposed National Prevention Investment Framework

The [Productivity Commission's Interim Report: Delivering Quality Care Services](#) has highlighted the need for a new approach to prevention funding, recommending the establishment of a National Prevention Investment Framework to support long-term government investment in prevention in the context of care services (10).

The proposed framework will:

- support governments to invest in prevention programs that improve outcomes and reduce demand for future acute care services.
- identify programs that produce the best value for money, based on rigorous assessment and evaluation. provide a stable and ongoing basis for funding prevention, recognising that the benefits fall across sectors and levels of government, and over extended timeframes.

Designated funding

Designated or ‘earmarked’ funding refers to government or legislated funds set aside for specific purposes and outcomes. Designated funding can be sourced from a variety of internal streams within government, or through taxes or levies, a financial charge imposed by the government on individuals, businesses or other entities with the goal of raising funds for public purpose work (12).

This is referred to as hypothecated taxation, for example, a tax on petrol and diesel might be used to fund road and highway construction, while a tax on cigarettes might be used to fund healthcare programmes (this model was previously used to fund health promotion agency, VicHealth).

In Australia, there is already precedent for having designated funding to support family violence services in Canberra (see case study below).

Another source of designated funding is place-based investment alongside infrastructure projects. Place-based primary prevention activities are already being rolled out in Victoria and with the significant number of infrastructure projects across the state there is an opportunity to link this investment in community safety and wellbeing to an investment through a place-based model.

Designated or ‘earmarked’ funding, can be used to establish a targeted fund. This is a funding mechanism designed to support a specific purpose, centrally determined by government and often distributed through grant rounds, outcome linked contracts or social investment partnerships (12).

While governments already invest in primary prevention of gendered violence through grant rounds, they are often short-term (1–3 years), insecure and insufficient to sustain programs and activities for long enough to demonstrate their intended outcomes and impact (2).

This could be strengthened through the establishment of a dedicated Primary Prevention Fund. This would ensure a consistent source of funding for long-term primary prevention initiatives by guaranteeing a specific amount of funding per year (to be based off updated modelling) external to the annual budget cycles and support initiatives for a minimum of five years

A designated Primary Prevention Fund would allow peak and designated government bodies to be moved to rolling funding rather than wait for short-term program funding or periodically applying for lapsing funding. This would increase Victoria’s capacity to implement a comprehensive statewide approach to prevention across all key settings.

Case study: ACT Safer Families Levy

In 2016, the ACT government introduced the [Safer Families Levy](#) to fund initiatives to address family violence and provide support and raise awareness of domestic violence in the ACT community.

The levy applies to all residential and rural properties, with payments made annually in household rate bills. The levy has undergone a staged increase from \$30 per year in 2016 to \$70 per year in 2026–27.

Between inception to 30 June 2024, the fund raised over \$46 million dollars. The ACT government expects to raise \$49.401 million in the four years to 2027–28. This contributes to 20 per cent of all ACT government funding for domestic and family violence programs (3).

However, the oversight and management of the fund have been questioned by sector advocates and the [ACT Auditor-General’s Performance Audit Report](#). In response, the ACT government has committed to reforming the levy, integrating greater transparency, better communication and a performance monitoring strategy and evaluation framework to monitor and measure the outcomes and impacts of the initiatives funded through the Safer Families Levy (4).

Pooled or braided funding

A true whole-of-community approach to prevention requires a coordinated response across government and the community (13). Pooled or braided funding models are financial strategies used to combine resources from multiple sources (such as federal, state, and private funders) to support an initiative, organisation or public purpose need.

These models aim to improve coordination and sustainability, reduce administrative burdens, promote shared ownership and enhance the effectiveness of services by breaking down funding silos (12).

There are opportunities to move towards a true whole-of-community approach to prevention, leveraging funds from a more diverse range of sources in the private and philanthropic sectors, broadening the funding base and enabling larger scale and longer-term prevention programs.

An example of this joint funding approach has already been tested in Victoria from Launch Housing.

The private and philanthropic sectors are well placed to support prevention efforts through funding pilots, place-based partnerships, and initial scaling that would enable organisations and communities to trial new approaches, embed community self-determination, and test implementation models across communities (2). However, to move past preliminary funding, private and philanthropic investment should be done in collaboration with government, allowing this funding to be provided with the support of relevant governance and oversight.

Pooled or braided funding models can also be between different levels of government (see the [Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2025–30 Federation Funding Agreement](#)) or government departments. This supports integration, shared accountability, and promotes connection across government where programs impact multiple areas.

While pooled or braided funding models can take considerable time and governance oversight effort to facilitate and manage, they can significantly reduce reliance on government funding over time and significantly enhance shared accountability across the whole community.

Case study: Launch Housing – Viv’s Place

In August 2022, Launch Housing completed the development of [Viv’s Place](#), an eight-storey supportive housing project located in Melbourne, to provide long-term, secure and permanent housing for women and children experiencing family violence and homelessness. In addition to providing safe housing for over 60 women and 140 children, Viv’s Place provides communal spaces for connection and support, along with wraparound services to support families to recover, rebuild and thrive.

Viv’s Place was made possible through the combined efforts of Launch Housing, Uniting Vic Tas, the Victorian Government and philanthropic support. The project’s total came to \$30 million dollars, of which the Victorian Government contributed 40 per cent. The realisation of the project was subsequently supported by a combination of philanthropic donors, including:

- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation
- Gandel Foundation
- The Ian Potter Foundation
- individual and family donors.

An Australian first, it is hoped that Viv’s Place will inspire further investment and replication of this effective model to address the risk of homeless for women and children experiencing family violence.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

Each model discussed represents a characteristic essential to future primary prevention funding.

Long-term

Prevention work is long-term, therefore long-term funding is essential to plan, implement and evaluate preventive strategies that yield outcomes over decades rather than years. Long-term investment frameworks align with the evidence that suggests it takes more than five years of sustained work across the social ecology to see population-level positive impacts for prevention work (14, 7, 9). No matter the model used, primary prevention initiatives should be funded for at least 5 years.

Sustainable

Each year the prevention sector spends significant resources on applying for grants, tenders and providing budget bids rather than doing the important work of preventing family, sexual and gendered violence. A dedicated primary prevention fund would provide consistent funding. This would provide long-term security and allow prevention work to move past trials and pilots.

Collaborative

Pooled or braided co-funding models allow governments, private sector and philanthropic organisations to make contributions to primary prevention efforts in tandem. This ensures the cross-jurisdictional benefits of a program are considered, and programs that are able to be funded sufficiently, particularly in a tight fiscal environment.

Well-designed and innovative funding models can help overcome existing barriers to funding prevention.

Collaborative, long-term and sustainable models used together are the key to a well-funded and supported prevention sector in Victoria that will deliver vital evidence to show what works to lower rates of family, sexual and gendered violence across populations.

ABOUT RESPECT VICTORIA

Respect Victoria is the state's dedicated organisation for the prevention of family violence and violence against women. Our vision is a Victorian community where all people are safe, equal and respected, and live free from family violence and violence against women. To achieve our vision, we lead and support evidence-informed primary prevention and act as a catalyst for transformational social change.

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APPENDIX A: CHARACTERISTICS OF PREVENTION FUNDING MODELS

Sources

Type	Description	Example
Government	A large portion of prevention activity is funded by the government at all levels - local, state and federal. In Victoria, the majority of funding is provided through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, with the Department of Education also contributing to prevention efforts through the Respectful Relationships Initiative.	Through the Free from Violence Local Government Program , Family Safety Victoria and Local Government Victoria provided joint funding of \$6.5 million to 27 councils to embed gender equality and family violence prevention practices into their work.
Philanthropy	Prevention programs may also be run through philanthropic funders aimed at developing gender equality efforts, women's empowerment, safety and wellbeing and place-based or community public health efforts. This is most often the product of growing interest amongst funders, and long-term relationships built with organisations undertaking prevention.	Minderoo Foundation's \$7.5 million, 3-year philanthropic partnership with Our Watch to develop the Violence Prevention Innovation Lab .
Private sector	The private sector has a vested interest in leading and funding prevention efforts within business, industry and key settings. Compliance with key gender equality, human rights, and workplace health and safety requirements is a duty required of employers, these efforts also result in greater productivity and safer, more equal and inclusive workplaces.	Westpac Group Safer Children, Safer Communities grant program (2021–2024) invested \$9.2 million in child safety organisations and researchers over three years to strengthen their approaches to targeted education, prevention programs and trauma informed services.
Fee-for-service	Under a fee-for-service model, organisations charge a monetary fee for the delivery of prevention activities, for example, the delivery of training and workshops related to gender-based violence in universities or workplaces. This can diversify income, reduce reliance on grants and promote long-term sustainability. Income generated through fee-for-service models can be reinvested into the organisation and can provide free or subsidised prevention activities, particularly in not-for-profit organisations	Many organisations offer a range of fee-for-service training courses in preventing and responding to family violence, including Safe and Equal , Our Watch , SASVic and Zoe Belle Gender Collective .

Length

Type	Description	Example
One off	One-off funding is a single investment normally provided for a specific project or program or as part of a grant round	16 Days of Activism Grants for programs during 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.
Short-term	This is 1–2-year funding for an ongoing program or organisation. Additional funding may be made available, but organisations need to either apply for additional funding through a funding round or outline new outcomes	Budget funding to 12 community-based organisations for the Supporting Young People to Understand Affirmative Consent Program (2022–2025). An initial 2 years of funding was received, with a 1-year extension before this funding lapsed.
Long-term	Multi-year funding arrangements of a minimum of five years for an ongoing program or organisation.	Australian Federal Government invested \$100.4 million over five years to support Our Watch's delivery of the Primary Prevention Activities Program under the <i>National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children</i> .
Ongoing	Sustained, secure and flexible funding for an ongoing program or organisation, provided over multiple years, or with no set end date. Indexation arrangements are often applied in line with inflation.	Sustained investment to deliver Dhek Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (2018–2028). The 10-year investment strategy supports Aboriginal self-determining structures to lead family violence reform.