



09 MAY, 2026

**DARK DAYS**

Bendigo Advertiser, Bendigo



Centre for Non-Violence head of business development and advocacy Clare Shamier at the vigil for victims of domestic violence on Wednesday. Picture by Darren Howe

**BUDGET BOOST WELCOMED BUT SECTOR'S FUTURE REMAINS DIM**

At a time when police call-outs for family violence have hit record highs, support advocates warn the state budget's short-term funding is little more than a drop in the ocean. "To be facing this funding insecurity is really difficult," Bendigo's Centre for Non-Violence chief Margaret Augerinos says.

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**Budget leaves Bendigo groups in the lurch**

**Brodie Everist**

DOMESTIC violence support advocates say the state budget has once again left them with short-term funding to get by - but not enough to help everyone who needs it, and leaving them wondering what happens in 2028, or even next year.

The budget grants just under \$100 million over two years for family violence, sexual violence and the statewide Central Informa-

tion Point - a multi-agency service that collates and shares information on family violence perpetrators.

Bendigo's Centre for Non-Violence, which supports both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, has received \$2 million over the next two years, which was welcomed by its chief executive, but she said it did not meet demand.

Speaking to the *Bendigo*

*Advertiser* in Rosalind Park on Wednesday, moments before a vigil for victims of domestic violence, Margaret Augerinos said they faced "tough decisions" over which programs they could fund.

"There's record numbers of police call-outs for family violence response - the need is just so significant. To be facing this funding insecurity is really difficult."

Call-outs to Victorian family incidents - where police fill out a family violence report - has increased to more than 100,000 a year - up from about 75,000 10 years earlier.

Ms Augerinos said they couldn't advertise for replacement roles near the end of the financial year because they didn't know if they could fund the jobs.

"Some staff are on insecure contracts and, inevitably, if



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we can't give them certainty, they leave. How can you plan and deliver human services unless you've got security of funding?"

At Safe and Equal, a peak body for Victorian organisations that work in family and gender-based violence, chief executive officer Christine Mathieson said the government's funding commitment was welcome, but left the sector "insecure".

"More victim survivors are reporting, but without increased funding they won't receive the help they need. We need long-term funding for services and for preven-

tion in order to save lives and stop the profound harm we're currently seeing."

Women's Health Loddon Mallee was one of 12 organisations to share in \$9.2 million over 12 months in the state budget, in addition to their "core funding".

While Kellie Dunn, chief executive of Women's Health Loddon Mallee, was "grateful", she said the result of their work "comes over time".

The organisation works towards prevention of women's health issues, including violence against women, through building awareness,

behaviour-change campaigns and advocacy.

"We can't, with certainty, plan past 12 months."

The government says it has implemented all 227 recommendations of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence - including the Central Information Point.

"Women deserve to be safe and free from abuse and violence - and when women are still dying at the hands of men, we must do more," a government spokesperson said.

"That's why this year we have delivered a \$100 million to continue Victoria's

nation-leading efforts to respond to family and sexual violence.

According to the spokesperson, the government has expanded the Personal Safety Initiative - a government-funded program that modifies the homes of family violence victims to increase security and deter perpetrators.

■ Support - 1800RESPECT



Centre for Non-Violence's Clare Shamier (back) and Margaret Augerinos at the vigil for victims of domestic violence on Wednesday. Picture by Darren Howe