

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

23 May 2023

State Budget addresses funding gap at Specialist Family Violence Courts

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) welcomes the State Government's budget announcements confirming their commitment to supporting victim-survivors of family violence through Community Legal Centres and Victoria Legal Aid.

Attorney-General Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP announced that victim-survivors of family violence will be better supported with \$22.8 million to provide Specialist Family Violence Legal Assistance at Courts in Ringwood, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Latrobe, Melbourne, Sunshine, Werribee and Geelong.

ECLC has been strongly advocating for funding to be provided to both meet surging demand and implement the new model at the Ringwood Specialist Family Violence Court, which formally commenced in October 2022.

The Centre provides free duty lawyer services at Ringwood Court four days each week and has been seriously affected by the lack of funding which has left victim survivors at risk. ECLC reluctantly introduced a limit on assistance at the Court to protect both client safety and staff wellbeing.

ECLC's CEO Michael Smith said, "We know the distressing impacts for community members – mostly women and children - of not being able to fully support victim survivors who are facing immense challenges in navigating the court system and are at their most vulnerable."

"We are very reassured that the government is recognising the vital importance of this support for victim-survivors of family violence and look forward to more fully implementing the recommendations of the landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The State Budget also confirmed continuing funding for the court Early Resolution Service as well as broader CLC family violence and early intervention programs. Further funding to meet organisational wage pressures will also ensure key programs continue.

ECLC has received strong support from key MPs across Melbourne's East and greatly appreciate their advocacy. ECLC thanks the Attorney-General, the Victorian government as well as all of the local MPs and the broader community for their advocacy and support, particularly for people experiencing family violence," added Smith.

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For further media information and interviews, please contact:

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