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Title: Responding to Family Violence – A Whole-of-Government Approach

Author's name and institutional affiliations:

Dr Jane Bennett & Ms Diane Godfrey

Housing and Community Building Division, Department of Human Services, Victoria

Presenter's name:

Dr Jane Bennett

Abstract:

Family violence affects all communities and is a profound cause of entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage; it has significant personal, social, health and economic costs. For example: family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years; Access Economics has estimated the total indirect and direct costs of family violence for Australia at \$8 billion.

In 2002 Victoria launched the Women's Safety Strategy, to examine violence against women (family violence, sexual assault and workplace violence) and established a Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence to develop an integrated response to family violence in Victoria. Details of the Victorian Government's integrated approach to responding to family violence more effectively were announced in the social policy statement *A Fairer Victoria* in May 2005.

Support to find new accommodation, and maintain that housing while dealing with the consequences of family violence, are key responses for victims of family violence. However, overseas and Australian research indicates that the most effective solutions involve a whole of government, multi-agency response. This should include a strong police and judicial response, and well targeted human service responses, including housing for women, children and men. All services need to work together to break the cycle of violence.

As part of the whole of government response, Victoria is diversifying its approach to providing housing and support, moving beyond the secure refuge model. In future there will be more housing choices for women and children, including the option of remaining in the family home with extra support when it is safe to do so. Alternative emergency accommodation will be provided for men if this will help women and children to remain in the family home.

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Address and full contact details of the presenter:

Dr Jane Bennett

Manager, Program Development

Housing and Community Building Division

Department of Human Services

7th Floor, 555 Collins Street

MELBOURNE 3000

Tel: 03-96169009; 0401 770 599

Email: Jane.bennett@dhs.vic.gov.au

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