

**FROM THE MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, MINISTER FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

DATE: Monday, October 11, 2004

TEN YEAR PLAN TO TACKLE INDIGENOUS FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Bracks Government will invest an additional \$4 million over four years and develop a ten year plan to reduce Indigenous family violence in Victoria.

This is part of the Government's response to a report by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force, and is another important step in the path towards Reconciliation.

The funding boost builds on the \$14.2 million allocated for services to support vulnerable Indigenous children and families, and to establish a Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court in the 2004-05 State Budget.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Gavin Jennings, said family violence in Indigenous communities remained a serious issue and required a long-term response by both Government and the community.

"An Indigenous person in Victoria is eight times more likely to be a victim of family violence than a non-Indigenous person," Mr Jennings said.

"The Bracks Government recognises the causes of Indigenous family violence are linked to the impacts of dispossession and the breakdown of family and community structures.

"The report of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force provides a foundation for the Government and Indigenous communities to work in partnership to reduce the high levels of Indigenous family violence."

Mr Jennings said the Government would implement a number of new initiatives to address family violence and its causes.

"A key initiative is the establishment of three Holistic Family Healing Centres in Victoria, which are designed to prevent, reduce and respond to all forms of Indigenous family violence," Mr Jennings said.

"These centres will offer family violence counsellors and family support workers and will assist children, teenagers, women and men."

The Task Force was established in 2002 by the Bracks Government to undertake extensive community consultation, research and analysis of Indigenous family violence in Victoria.

Community Services Minister, Sherryl Garbutt said the Government would adopt the report's recommendation to establish an Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum to oversee the development and implementation of the ten year plan.

"Senior representatives from Government and Indigenous communities will work together on the forum to shape and monitor programs designed to tackle Indigenous family violence," she said.

"By working in partnership, the Government and the Indigenous community will develop real and lasting solutions to reduce family violence."

Key recommendations from the report are being met as part of an \$18.2 million allocation in the recent State Budget. These are:

□ **\$3.52 million over four years to establish three Holistic Family Healing Centres**, that will provide a comprehensive range of services, including family violence counsellors and family support workers;

□ **\$120,000 over four years to broaden the Indigenous Scholarships Scheme** to provide scholarships for Indigenous students who are undertaking counselling studies at the tertiary level;

□ **\$360,000 over four years for an Indigenous Men's Resource Advisory Service** to provide expertise, information and advice to strengthen the capacity of workers and agencies to deliver culturally appropriate services to Indigenous men who use violence;

□ **\$5.2 million over four years to establish a Family Violence division of the Magistrates Court**;

□ **\$3.12 million over four years to fund eight Indigenous Family Support Innovation Projects**, which aim to provide early intervention and support services to at-risk Indigenous families to prevent the need for child protection intervention; and

□ **\$5.9 million over four years to extend the Aboriginal Family Decision Making Program** to assist Aboriginal families affected by violence find solutions which protect the child and maintain the child's care within the family and Aboriginal community.

Ms Garbutt said Aboriginal children were ten times more likely to end up in the child protection system – a statistic that brings shame to all Victorians.

"The Aboriginal Family Decision Making Program will attempt to intervene earlier to address family problems and will give Indigenous elders and respected community leaders a crucial say in any decisions around the child's welfare," Ms Garbutt said.

"The Bracks Government recognises the complexity of issues surrounding the over-representation of Aboriginal children in State care and is taking action to support at-risk families before they reach crisis point."

The Government will also continue the Indigenous Family Violence Community

Initiatives Fund, which has delivered \$650,000 each year over the past two years for community projects to address family violence.

"On behalf of the Bracks Government, I thank the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force members for their tireless work in producing this outstanding report," Mr Jennings said.

"Through our collective efforts we can break the cycle of violence and begin the healing."