



**SAFE  
HOMES  
FAMILIES  
COMMUNITIES**

# **RESPONDING AND REPORTING 2021**

Achievements in the delivery of  
*Safe Homes, Families, Communities:*  
*Tasmania's action plan for family  
and sexual violence 2019-2022*

**November 2021**

# SAFE HOMES, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES 2020-21\*



**\$26 million** over three years (2019-20 to 2021-22) committed to implement our ongoing response to eliminate family and sexual violence under Safe Homes, Families Communities

**\$9.347** million in additional funding allocated to family and sexual violence responses since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic

**200** high-risk family violence incidents mapped by the Safe Families Coordination Unit

**3,482** at-risk children identified and **3,953** notifications made by the Safe Families Coordination Unit to schools to support students experiencing family violence

**612** clients provided with support, counselling and referral options by the Safe Choices service

Over **8,000** unique views of the family and sexual violence website, Safe from Violence

**923** Aboriginal families (parents and children) supported by Aboriginal Family Safety Workers (minimum number based on families that have identified as Aboriginal)

**119** high-risk family violence perpetrators tracked through the Electronic Monitoring program

**65** households assisted by the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program

**331** additional children and young people received counselling services provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation\*\*

**1,977** additional hours of counselling and service provision for children and young people provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation\*\*

**1,617** additional hours of counselling services for adults provided by Engender Equality\*\*

**312** additional clients provided with legal assistance by Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Tasmania Legal Aid\*\*

**174** women provided with safety upgrades to support them to remain in their own home or home of choice

\* All data is from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

\*\* These clients were supported by funding under Safe Homes, Families, Communities, and are additional to clients supported by other Government programs

# FOREWORD



## The Tasmanian Government is committed to eliminating all forms of family and sexual violence.

*Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022* (Safe Homes, Families, Communities) outlines a vision for our State where all Tasmanians are safe, equal and respected and our homes, families and communities are free from all forms of family and sexual violence.

Since 2015, when we launched our first Family Violence Action Plan, the Tasmanian Government has invested an additional \$61.3 million in specific family and sexual violence responses. This includes \$26 million to deliver 40 actions under Safe Homes, Families, Communities, and is on top of the \$19 million in direct funding and \$59 million in indirect funding annually for government services that prevent and respond to family and sexual violence.

*Responding and Reporting 2021* continues the Tasmanian Government's commitment to publicly report implementation progress and outcomes for Safe Homes, Families, Communities. Implementation has continued to progress well throughout 2020-21 with key achievements including:

- All Tasmanian Government departments commenced implementation of the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards, which sets goals for workplaces to address gender inequality and prevent violence against women.
- Publication of new resources on the Safe from Violence website, including a non-physical violence awareness campaign, together with fact sheets and audio recordings in ten community languages.

- Delivery of a new state-wide program providing early intervention therapeutic services for children and young people exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
- Committing \$2.4 million to continue the electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators for a further two years, following our successful trial that achieved dramatic reductions in assaults and family violence incidents.
- Development and delivery of training initiatives, including the *Family Violence: Assessing Risk to Safety* training package for the Child Safety Service and the *Family and Sexual Violence and Emergency Events* training module, available on the State Emergency Service website.

This year has not been without its challenges, as COVID-19 has continued to impact our community. I would like to acknowledge victim-survivors for their courage, and thank the sector, and its dedicated workforce, who work every day to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence and to hold perpetrators to account.

I look forward to continuing to work together in our final year of Safe Homes, Families and Communities. We will continue to drive the implementation of our current Plan and will start the process of developing a new Action Plan to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in our community. Our third Action Plan will build on our successes and further refine and target our efforts, to achieve the goal that every Tasmanian is able to live free from violence.

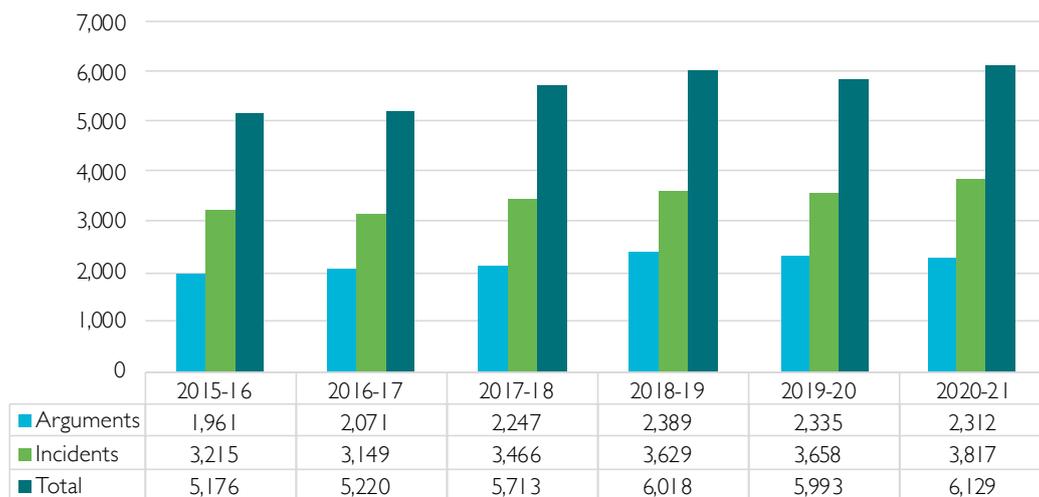
Jacquie Petrusma MP  
Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence



# FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TASMANIA

## Family violence

In 2020-21, Tasmania Police attended 3,817 family violence incidents and 2,312 occasions classified as family arguments or family information reports<sup>1</sup>. The graph below shows the reported incidence of family violence over the past six financial years.



Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Reporting Services, August 2021.

In 2020-21, there was a continued reduction in the number of family violence incidents assessed as high risk: 212 in 2020-21, compared with 391 in 2015-16. This represents a 46 per cent reduction over the six years since the first year of the first Action Plan (2015-16).

Table 1: Family violence incidents in Tasmania by risk category<sup>2</sup>

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Low	1,026	1,066	1,387	1,606	1,690	1,922
Medium	1,789	1,753	1,768	1,750	1,738	1,683
High	391	330	311	273	230	212
Total	3,215	3,149	3,466	3,629	3,658	3,817

Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Reporting Services, August 2021.

Over the six-year period to 2020-21, medium-risk incidents decreased by 6 per cent and low risk incidents increased by 87 per cent. The increase in low-risk incidents has seen an increase of 2 per cent in total family violence arguments and incidents (5,993 to 6,129) from 2019-20 to 2020-21.

This sustained level of reporting suggests a reduced level of tolerance for family violence in the community and by persons affected by family violence. It also shows an increased awareness and confidence in family violence response, intervention and support services.

<sup>1</sup> A family argument is a dispute where family violence as defined in the *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas), has not been, and is not likely to be, committed. For example: A couple may engage in a loud argument that attracts the attention of a concerned neighbour who contacts Tasmania Police. On arrival, Tasmania Police make an assessment about whether a situation is a family argument or family violence.

<sup>2</sup> Risk category is determined by the rating under the Risk Assessment Screening Tool (RAST) which indicates the likelihood of the perpetrator of family violence repeating or escalating their violence.

## Sexual violence

In 2020-21, 453 sexual assaults were reported to Tasmania Police, a 100 per cent increase from 2019-20 and 67 per cent above the six-year average (272).

Table 2: Sexual Assaults recorded

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
240	249	220	240	227	453

Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Reporting Services, August 2021.

The number of sexual assaults reported to police can vary significantly from year to year due to the reporting of historical sexual assaults. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that it took survivors of childhood sexual abuse on average 24 years to report, if they reported at all.<sup>3</sup> Of the 453 sexual assaults reported in 2020-21, 40 per cent (184) were committed more than a year before they were reported, some occurring several decades ago.

Females accounted for 83 per cent of victim-survivors. Most sexual assaults reported occurred at residential locations (69 per cent).

## The ongoing impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 does not cause, justify or excuse violent and abusive behaviour. However, a broad range of factors resulting from COVID-19 may compound or increase the risk, severity and frequency of violence, including: isolation; quarantine; financial insecurity; stress; concern; family disruptions; or changes to roles and routines.

For these reasons, it was anticipated that the rate of family and sexual violence may increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Tasmania, the number of family violence arguments and incidents reported to Tasmania Police continues to remain close to the three-year average.

While reporting is stable, we know that historically, underreporting of family and sexual

violence has been an issue across all states and territories. Specialist family and sexual violence services have reported increased or steady demand for services and increased case complexity since the onset of the pandemic.

The Tasmanian Government is regularly consulting with specialist family and sexual violence services to monitor demand and has made significant additional investments to ensure increased operational capacity of specialist services to 30 June 2022 (see the section 'A Flexible, Responsive Approach' at the end of this report).

## Data monitoring and building the evidence base in Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government works closely with service providers to better understand demand for family and sexual violence services.

Monitoring demand outside of our criminal justice response continues to prove challenging due to the complexity of collating data sets across all community-based support services. This is not unique to Tasmania, and is also experienced across all states and territories, where differences in the way data is collected means data is often not comparable across services.

In 2020-21, the Department of Communities Tasmania commenced the Demand, Assess, Track, Act (DATA) Project, a dedicated data project to review current and preferred data reporting capability across our Government and non-government specialist family and sexual violence services.

The DATA Project has close alignment with the work being undertaken under Action 36 to establish a common risk assessment tool. Both of these will inform improved data reporting capability for our specialist services being progressed under Action 35.

Building this evidence base is essential to ensuring that our programs and services meet the needs of victim-survivors and are effective in preventing and responding to family and sexual violence.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. 2017. Final Report: Preface and executive summary. December 2017.

# SAFE HOMES, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES



## Primary prevention and early intervention

1. Membership of Our Watch
2. Establish an Our Watch Primary Prevention Officer in Tasmania
3. Embed Respectful Relationships education in Tasmanian Government schools
4. Support the successful National Campaign *Stop It At The Start*
5. Support implementation of the new National Sexual Violence Campaign
6. Continue to ensure that gender equality and respect are at the centre of all Tasmanian State Service workplaces
7. Develop a family and sexual violence website
8. Work with the eSafety Commissioner to deliver education and training in response to technology-facilitated abuse
9. Deliver a Problem Sexual Behaviours and Sexually Abusive Behaviours program for children and young people
10. Support Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities to deliver targeted primary prevention and early intervention programs and to improve service delivery for Aboriginal people affected by family and sexual violence
11. Trial the Step Up adolescent intervention program
12. Strengthen the Defendant Health Liaison Service to provide early intervention to offenders
13. Deliver the Men's Referral Service

## *Safe Homes, Families, Communities:*

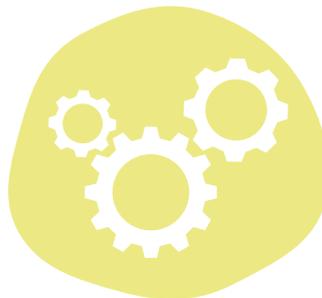
### *Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019–2022*

*Safe Homes, Families,  
Communities* outlines  
40 actions to prevent  
and respond to family  
and sexual violence  
in Tasmania.



## Response and recovery

14. Deliver Safe Choices
15. Support women with disability through the Local Support Coordinator role in Safe Choices
16. Support children and families through the Safe Homes, Safe Families Support Team
17. Support Aboriginal families through the Aboriginal Family Safety Workers in Child and Family Centres
18. Provide increased counselling services for children and young people experiencing family violence
19. Provide counselling services for adults experiencing family violence
20. Invest in crisis accommodation through the *Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023*
21. Deliver the Rapid Rehousing program for people experiencing family violence
22. Deliver the Keeping Women Safe In Their Homes program
23. Provide legal assistance to people experiencing family violence
24. Deliver perpetrator programs for low, medium and high-risk perpetrators
25. Introduce the ability to require mandated behaviour change program participation as part of a Family Violence Order
26. Extend forensic medical examinations for adult victim-survivors of family and sexual violence to a statewide service



## Strengthening the service system

27. Strengthen the Safe Families Coordination Unit
28. Trial electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders, with opt-in available for victim-survivors
29. Strengthen specialist police prosecution services
30. Implement legislative reform to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence
31. Improve data collection and reporting
32. Membership of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
33. Strengthen mechanisms for schools to respond to technology-facilitated abuse including image-based abuse
34. Roll out mobile phone data extraction devices to collect evidence of technology-facilitated abuse
35. Centralise management of family and sexual violence services within the Department of Communities Tasmania
36. Introduce standardised risk assessment processes across government and non-government family and sexual violence services
37. Develop and deliver training across identified Tasmanian Government services to respond to family and sexual violence
38. Establish a Family Violence Liaison Officer in the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line
39. Undertake a feasibility study for a disclosure scheme in Tasmania
40. Review the regional sexual assault protocols

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21

*Safe Homes, Families, Communities* builds on actions established under the first family violence action plan and introduces several new actions.

## Primary prevention and early intervention

- The Tasmanian Government continues to promote Our Watch campaigns and resources, including the *Doing Nothing Does Harm* campaign across the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence 2020 (Action 1).
- Key activities of the Our Watch Senior Advisor Tasmania included supporting Tasmanian Government departments to implement the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards, working with the Local Government Association of Tasmania to identify opportunities with local governments, and targeted engagement with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations (Action 2).
- The Department of Education refreshed the Respectful Relationships Education professional learning suite and website, including content for parents and carers (Action 3).
- The *Stop It At The Start* campaign advertising burst from 8 March to 31 July 2021 saw the campaign website receive 1.3 million page views, and campaign resources were accessed approximately 18,000 times across Australia (Action 4).
- On 7 December 2020, the Premier, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, announced that all Tasmanian Government departments would implement the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards (Action 6).
- In January 2021, the Department of Communities Tasmania launched a non-physical violence awareness campaign, which included freely available resources on the Safe from Violence website. As part of this, in March 2021, the Tasmanian branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia distributed 500,000 prescription repeat folders printed with the campaign information state-wide (Action 7).
- In January 2021, the Tasmanian Government developed a series of family violence fact sheets and audio recordings in ten community languages to ensure critical information reaches Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community members (Action 7).
- On 1 April 2021, the Sexual Assault Support Service commenced delivery of a new state-wide program providing early intervention therapeutic services for children and young people exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours (Action 9).
- Launched the Aboriginal Primary Prevention and Early Intervention Grants Program to deliver community-led programs for Tasmanian Aboriginal people (Action 10).
- In September 2020, the Tasmanian Government received the independent evaluation of the Step Up adolescent intervention trial program. In February 2021, the Tasmanian Government allocated funding received through the National Partnership on COVID-19 Family and Domestic Violence Responses to continue the trial for a further 12 months in 2021-22 (Action 11).



- In 2020-21, 211 new clients accessed the Defendant Health Liaison Service state-wide and 1,353 client contacts were made through face to face meetings, email and phone (Action 12).

- In 2020-21, there was a 208 per cent increase to inbound calls to the Men's Referral Service from the previous year (115 to 354), indicating a positive uptake in men seeking help for behaviour change and increased awareness of the service (Action 13).



*The Premier, the Hon Peter Gutwein MP and Patty Kinnersley, Chief Executive Officer of Our Watch at the launch of Tasmanian Government departments' implementation of the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards in December 2020.*

*Tasmanian Government launch of the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards.*

*L-R: Tim Bullard, Secretary, Department of Education; Commissioner of Police, Darren Hine; Sean Terry, Executive Director, Energy, State Growth; Tim Baker, Secretary, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment; Jenny Gale, Head of the State Service and Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Ginna Webster, Secretary Department of Justice; the Premier the Hon Peter Gutwein MP, and Tony Ferrall, Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance.*



## Response and recovery

- 612 clients were provided with practical support, counselling, information and referral by Safe Choices (Action 14).
- 120 Safe Choices clients with a disability were supported through the Local Support Coordinator (Action 15).
- 2,758 students affected by family violence in Tasmanian Government schools and Child and Family Learning Centres were supported by the Safe Homes, Safe Families Support Team (Action 16).
- 923 Aboriginal parents and children were supported by Aboriginal Family Safety Workers in Child and Family Learning Centres (minimum number based on families that have identified as Aboriginal) (Action 17).
- 331 children and young people received counselling services, and an additional 1,977 hours of counselling and service provision were provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation (Action 18).
- 196 adults accessed counselling services and an additional 1,617 hours of counselling services were provided through Engender Equality (Action 19).
- 65 households were assisted through the Rapid Rehousing program (Action 21).
- 174 women were assisted to stay safely in their own home, or a home of their choice, through the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program (Action 22).
- 312 clients were provided with legal assistance by Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Tasmania Legal Aid (Action 23).
- Delivered a new Resilience Program for high and medium risk family violence perpetrators in Tasmanian Prison Services. The Resilience Program aims to improve engagement prior to undertaking the Family Violence Offender Intervention Program (Action 24).
- Commenced planning to review the introduction of mandated behaviour change program participation as part of a Family Violence Order (Action 25).

- 15 forensic medical examinations were performed for victim-survivors of family violence, and 147 examinations were performed for victim-survivors of sexual assault (Action 26).

## Strengthening the service system

- The Safe Families Coordination Unit mapped 200 high risk family violence incidents, identified 3,482 children affected by family violence and made 3,953 notifications to schools (Action 27).
- 119 family violence perpetrators were tracked through the Electronic Monitoring Trial, with 78 victim-survivors also opting-in to the Trial (Action 28).
- The Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies finalised its independent review of the Electronic Monitoring Trial. The review found a 75 per cent reduction of assaults; an 81 per cent reduction of threats; an 87 per cent decrease in allegations of emotional abuse; and a 100 per cent decrease in high-risk family violence incidents (Action 28).
- 2,022 family violence matters were prosecuted by Specialist Police Prosecution Services (Action 29).
- The Tasmanian Government implemented two new legislative reforms to strengthen how perpetrators are held to account: *Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Act 2020*; and *Justice Miscellaneous (Court Backlog and Related Matters) Act 2020* (Action 30).
- In June 2021, the Tasmanian Government committed to introduce a standalone offence for non-fatal strangulation (Action 30).
- The Department of Education developed a suite of protective behaviours and personal safety online resources to assist children and young people to identify early warning signs of technology-facilitated abuse and strategies to protect themselves (Action 33).



Fact sheets with information for people using violence and people experiencing violence are available in ten community languages and audio recordings at [www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au](http://www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au).

Two examples of the fact sheets in Arabic (left) and Hakka Chin (right).



Examples of postcards developed as part of the Tasmanian Government's non-physical violence awareness campaign.

Clockwise from top left: This is economic abuse, This is emotional abuse, service information, and This is stalking.

- The Department of Communities Tasmania commenced a project to introduce standardised risk assessment, reporting and data collection across community-based family and sexual violence services (Action 36).
- *Responding to family and sexual violence: a guide for service providers and practitioners* was re-released to include updated information on responses to family and sexual violence (Action 37).
- *Family Violence: Assessing Risk to Safety* training package was developed to support ongoing statewide training for Child Safety Services (Action 37).
- *Family and Sexual Violence and Emergency Events* training package was launched as part of Tasmanian Emergency Management Training on the SES website (Action 37).
- Commenced planning to review the regional sexual assault protocols (Action 40).



*Kelsey Paske, Our Watch Senior Advisor Tasmania, speaks at the Be Brave 2021 Women in Leadership Forum.*



*Participants at the Be Brave 2021 Women in Leadership Forum learn about the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards program that is being implemented across all Tasmanian Government departments.*

# A FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE APPROACH

The Tasmanian Government's response to family and sexual violence continues to be flexible and responsive to emerging priorities. We continue to make significant additional investments to address current and emerging needs, to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence.

## Responding to increased demand

The Tasmanian Government recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic and elevation of the national conversation around intimate partner violence and sexual violence has increased demand for specialist family and sexual violence services. In response, the Government has taken decisive action to provide additional funding to enable the service system to respond.

Our Government was the first in Australia to announce dedicated funding to respond to family and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, committing \$2.7 million in March 2020 through the Tasmanian Government's Social and Economic Support Package. An additional \$3.636 million was allocated through the National Partnership Agreement on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses (National Partnership). This funding has supported a range of initiatives and includes funding for community-based specialist family and sexual violence services to maintain increased operational capacity through to 30 June 2022.

In 2021 the Tasmanian Government provided a further \$1.120 million to further increase capacity of five specialist family and sexual violence services and a further \$1.9 million to maintain increased operational capacity for Safe at Home, Tasmania's criminal justice response to family violence. This means that in total, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Tasmanian

Government has allocated an additional \$9.35 million to respond to increased need for family and sexual violence services.

The Tasmanian Government continues to monitor demand, wait lists and wait times to inform development of our third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan and future funding needs.

## Other initiatives

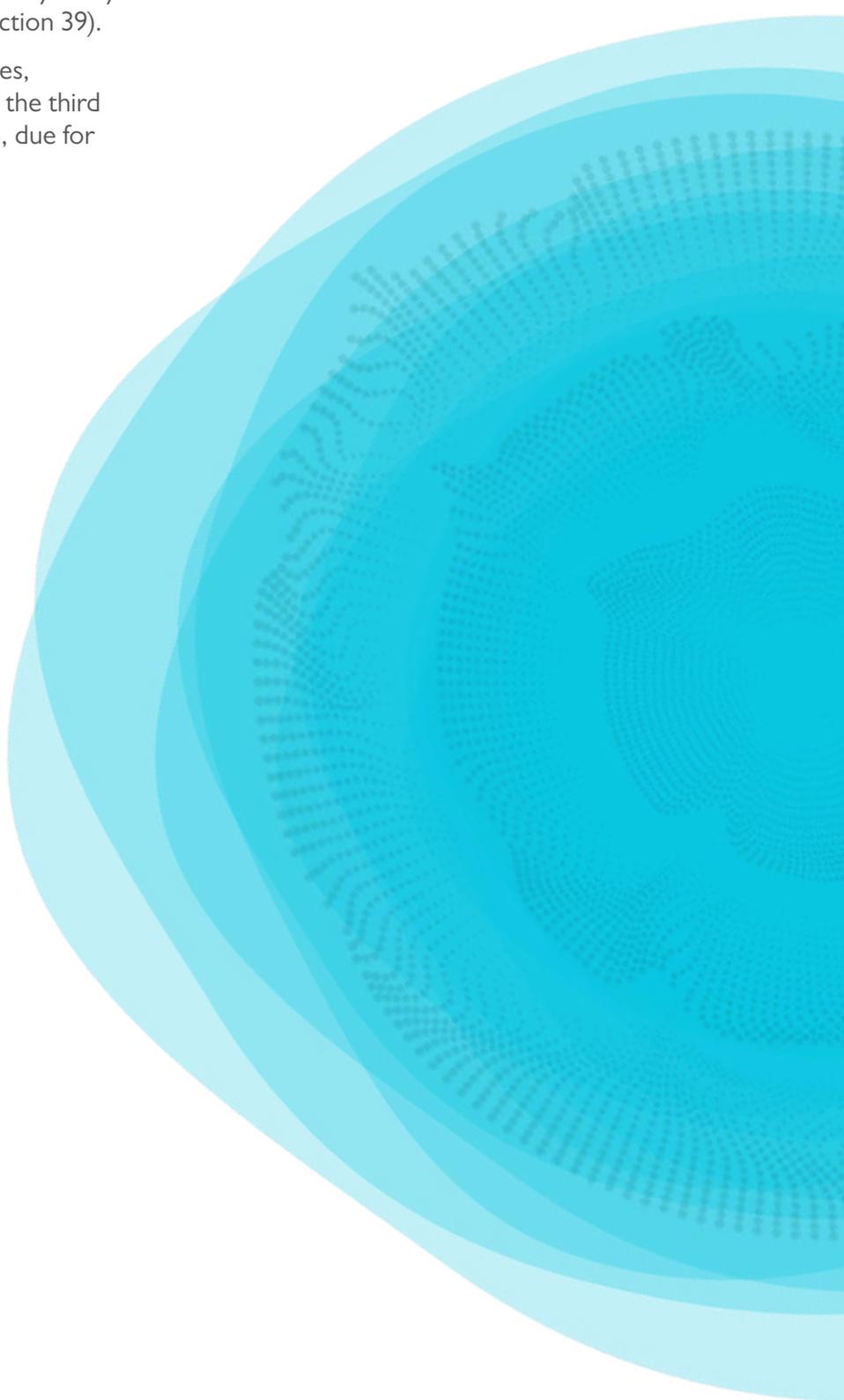
Other Tasmanian Government initiatives include \$11.25 million to support women and girls, and address safety. This includes:

- \$8.8 million over four years (2021-22 to 2024-25) in additional funding for free or low-cost community legal services, including women's legal services.
- \$2.4 million over two years (2021-22 to 2022-23) to continue electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators.
- \$50 000 towards a feasibility study into a crisis accommodation facility in the Northern Midlands for women affected by family violence.
- The development of a 'Modern Workplaces Framework' to provide a resource kit to support traditionally male dominated industries to provide a safe workplace for women.

# NEXT STEPS

Implementation of the Safe Homes, Families, Communities actions will continue over 2021-22, including the commencement of a feasibility study for a disclosure scheme in Tasmania (Action 39).

As we enter the final year of Safe Homes, Families, Communities we will develop the third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, due for release by July 2022.







Email: [fsvap@communities.tas.gov.au](mailto:fsvap@communities.tas.gov.au) | Visit: [www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au](http://www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au)

**If you or someone you know is impacted by family violence:**

Call the Safe at Home Family Violence Response and Referral Line on 1800 633 937

**If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual violence:**

Call the Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis Line on 1800 697 877

**In an emergency, always call 000**

For more information, visit [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au) or [www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au](http://www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au)