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Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

PO Box 292
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: 08 8303 0961
Fax: 08 8303 0963

ABN 11 525 031 744

premierscouncilforwomen@sa.gov.au

Submission: Domestic Violence in Australia

The South Australian Premier's Council for Women (PCW) welcomes the opportunity to submit comments into the Domestic Violence in Australia Inquiry.

PCW is a high level independent advisory body. We advise the Premier of South Australia and the Minister for the Status of Women on issues relating to women to facilitate a whole of government approach to meeting the needs of women in South Australia. The views expressed in this submission are those of PCW and do not necessarily reflect those of the South Australian Government.

PCW has prioritised five areas for its current work. These are (in no specific order):-

- women's safety and violence against women
- women's health and wellbeing
- women's employment and economic status
- women's leadership
- women with disabilities

To effectively eliminate violence against women we must acknowledge its gendered nature, recognising that women are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence. Any comprehensive response necessitates working across primary, secondary and tertiary levels of prevention.

State-wide consultations with South Australian women, undertaken by PCW, in 2010 and June 2014 have highlighted deep concern over the persistence of violence against women. South Australian women have called for actions that:-

- Ensure consistency in cross-jurisdictional responses and integrated service responses within South Australia and also across Australia for women moving across state and/or territory borders
- Acknowledge the importance of cultural differences across government, non-government, and community organisations who are working with women experiencing violence. Included here is a greater understanding of the issues surrounding forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Both recognised methods of control and abuse.
- Guarantee crisis accommodation which is responsive to the needs of individual women experiencing domestic and family violence both with and without children.
- Facilitate the dissemination of information and education about domestic violence, its impact on women's (and their children) lives.



Issue 1

Violence is a critical social determinant for the health¹ and wellbeing² of women. We need to acknowledge the many forms domestic violence can take physical, sexual, psychological, social, emotional, economic or spiritual abuse. The safety of women and children needs to be paramount in any response model. This requires affordable high quality specialist services suited to deliver short and long term practical and emotional support.

Women-run domestic violence services have both the expertise and the skills required to deliver high quality services. These organisations have a proven track record and women trust these services to meet their complex needs. Access to women-run and women's-only services is often an important part of the decision to take further action to address the violence women may be experiencing.

PCW is deeply concerned about funding cuts to Aboriginal, women's and community legal services, cuts to the National Affordable Housing Agreement and particularly the cessation of funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness from 2015/16.

Recommendation 1:

1.1. That the value of the knowledge and expertise provided by specialist women's service providers is acknowledged and consideration given to how best to ensure sustained funding for such services.

1.2 That women living in regional and remote areas have access to appropriate programs.

Issue 2

In conjunction with tertiary services PCW considers primary prevention to be a key in addressing the serious impacts of domestic violence. Gender inequity creates the setting that allows violence against women to occur, it requires changes in culture, society and social norms and involves everyone. It requires changes in the way we view women and how we understand violence against women. These attitudes continue to pervade our society and its institutions such as media, sport and business. Therefore addressing gender equity prevents violence against women before it occurs.

Recommendation 2:

Address cultural and social beliefs and behaviours within primary prevention strategies as a public health approach to address the underlying causes of violence against women including domestic violence.

Issue 3

There is a need to shift from victim blaming to ensuring the perpetrators of domestic violence are held accountable for their actions and face swift and serious consequences for their actions.

Recommendation 3:

3.1 Response models must include mechanisms to hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their behaviour.

¹ The health costs of violence: measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence, VIC Health 2004 http://www.health.vic.gov.au/vwhp/downloads/vichealth_violence%20%20summary.pdf

² The financial cost of domestic and family violence, July 2011
http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Fast_Facts_3.pdf



3.2 Accessibility to programs and services for perpetrators in regional and remote areas be improved.

Issue 4

Partnerships and collaborations, across all levels of government, business and community are critical to address the broader social impacts of domestic violence such as housing stability, child welfare, health and economic independence.

To truly address the underlying causes of violence and ensure consistency in cross-jurisdictional responses and integrated service responses across Australia for women moving across state and/or territory borders there should be a national advisory structure of all relevant stakeholders including all levels of government, the National Foundation to Prevent Violence, ANROWS³, AWAVA⁴, women's specialist services and other community organisations. Part of the role of a national advisory structure would need to be the development of service standards for all partners.

Recommendation 4:

Give high priority to the development of service standards across Australia as stated in *National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children* (the National Plan). This will support consistent responses to women and support cross-jurisdictional responses.

Continued collaborative action to address violence against women supports Australia's commitment to the UN Commission on the Status of Women⁵ and the National Plan⁶.

PCW commends the Australian Government for its ongoing commitment to the National Plan and for investigating the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Australia through this inquiry.

The PCW will read with interest the report the Senate Committee releases after consideration of the submissions to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Amanda Blair
Co-Chair
Premier's Council for Women

Ms Christine Zeitz
Co-Chair
Premier's Council for Women

³ ANROWS – Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

⁴ AWAVA – Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

⁵ [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_Agreed_Conclusions_\(CSW_report_excerpt\).pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_Agreed_Conclusions_(CSW_report_excerpt).pdf)

⁶ <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022>