



Government
of South Australia

Office for Women

Committed to Safety First Annual Roundtable

22 November 2019

Adelaide

Report prepared by the Office for Women for the Minister for Human Services and the Assistant Minister for Domestic and Family Violence Prevention



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Introduction

On 22 November 2019, the Government held the first annual Committed to Safety Roundtable for key stakeholders in the women's and community sectors. The purpose of the Roundtable was to look briefly at the progress made since the release of *Committed to Safety: A Framework for Addressing Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence* (CTS) and future directions for relevant services, policies and partnerships. The Hon Michelle Lensink, MLC, Minister for Human Services spoke about these issues, alongside the Hon Vickie Chapman MP, Attorney-General, Ms Carolyn Power MP, Assistant Minister for Domestic and Family Violence Prevention, and Ms Fiona Mort, Director of the Office for Women. Hand outs were provided to attendees, providing updates on the Government's election commitments as well as summaries of the Roundtables held prior to this event. Updates were provided by Senior public servants, including representatives of the South Australian Housing Authority and the Department of Human Services (Community and Family Services).

Key themes for discussion at the Roundtable were:

Safety first responses to DFSV and the intersection with housing and homelessness;

Earlier intervention for families impacted by DFSV, including opportunities for specialist DFSV services to work more closely with children's services to help prevent escalation to statutory child protection responses; and

Primary prevention, with a focus on the role of community organisations and other local groups.

State Housing Strategy, Safety First and Intersection with Family Violence Services

A summary presentation provided by the South Australian Housing Authority (SAHA), about the new State Housing and Homelessness, included information on the work undertaken to date, and the next steps, in the SAHA process. The Strategy will redefine and reform the housing system in South Australia over the next ten years, address current and future housing needs and provide a common vision for the future; including the needs of older women, women with disabilities and women experiencing domestic and family violence. An Aboriginal Housing Strategy is also being developed in 2020 by SAHA. An update about more general SAHA matters was also provided, including a commitment to establishing meaningful relationships with key organisations, both Government and non-Government (ie SA Health and specialist women's services).

Key feedback from attendees focused on the need for improved relationships and pathways between housing, homelessness, domestic, family and sexual violence, other key services and

Government agencies, as well as the importance of improving data collection and data sharing between services, and between Government and services.

Confusion regarding a common definition of 'safety first' was raised in some notes provided by attendees, and the necessary focus on specialist domestic and family violence services on crisis responses was a common theme raised by attendees on the day. There was agreement that service models based on partnerships and co-location would be beneficial for services and their clients, particularly in relation to early intervention and post-crisis responses, to help avoid unsafe housing and homelessness. Older women were flagged as a particularly high-risk group for homelessness.

Responding to Women, Children and Families

An update on the Child Support Co-Design process was provided, largely including the content of the Co-Design Findings and Next Steps: Child and Family Support System (June – October 2019) report, which is now publicly available on the Department of Human Services website.

There was strong agreement that many women are reluctant to seek assistance from domestic and family violence services due to real, or perceived, concerns that their children will become the subject of statutory action by the Department of Child Protection. In addition, domestic, family and sexual violence was noted as a key factor in the trauma and other complex issues experienced by families, requiring a response which is holistic, client focused and accessible.

There was also agreement that referral pathways and relationships between services need improvement, requiring mechanisms to allow specialist and mainstream services to interact, understand each other's work and share information.

Primary Prevention – Getting the Whole Community Involved

The role of the whole community in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence was discussed. Key sites of influence were recognised, and included community clubs, sporting organisations, schools, the media, religious organisations and businesses.

The development of a state-wide primary prevention plan was discussed, including feedback that actions targeted towards specific communities and cohorts would be beneficial, as would advice on bystander intervention.

Other Actions/ Feedback

There were some other issues raised by attendees, not directly related to the agenda items.

These included:

Information Sharing Guidelines – the need for Government to provide clarification on the ISGs and how they work.

The need to address the sexualisation of women and girls.

The need to increase the focus on sexual violence.

That elder abuse should be included in discussions about domestic, family and sexual violence.

The significant opportunities for collaboration and early intervention provided by the Government's new Safety Hubs.

The housing and service needs of women in, and leaving, prison.

There were also some common threads across all three agenda items, which included:

That the needs of specific population groups (for example, Aboriginal people, older people and culturally diverse people) and communities must always be considered in policy and practice.

The value of having the advice of people and families with lived experience of violence in developing policy and practice, as well as on the workforce.

That the ongoing need for specialist services does not negate the need for strong partnerships between services, and for mainstream services and first responders to understand the dynamics of domestic, family and sexual violence, from primary prevention to post crisis.

In addition, competition for funding was perceived as a key barrier for the provision of holistic service delivery.

Conclusion

The Assistant Minister for Domestic and Family Violence Prevention outlined the key issues raised and discussed at the Roundtable, as well as noting that the future directions for policy and practise will be shaped by the Roundtable feedback outlined in this summary document.

The Assistant Minister was clear about the importance of primary prevention, emphasising the crucial role of of non-government services, community and local organisations.