



Government
of South Australia

Office for Women

Domestic Violence Roundtable April 2018

Report prepared by the Office for Women



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A Message from the Minister for Human Services

On 13 April 2018, the Assistant Minister Carolyn Habib and I were delighted to hold a Roundtable for those working in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector to discuss the 2018 election commitments made by the Marshall Government.

This report provides an overview of:

- key themes raised on the day;
- points raised in relation to the Governments election commitments discussed under the groupings of Protection, Infrastructure and Support, and Service Responses; and
- feedback received from a follow up survey with all those invited.

I want to express our sincere thanks to all of you who participated, and to assure those who could not attend, that further Roundtables are planned. We are committed to working with you as we move forward with our election commitments; I believe that it is time that the Government worked hand in hand with the services on the ground. Your support, knowledge and advice is, and will be, invaluable as we progress our work to eliminate violence against women.

Hon Michelle Lensink MLC
Minister for Human Services

Introduction

This report is based on the Adelaide Roundtable.

Attendees were asked about their vision for the domestic and family violence sector. Responses including the following attributes:

- Shared respect
- Equality
- Inclusive
- Progressive
- Safe
- Navigable (whole-of-person system with easy access to services required).

Other suggestions described desired outcomes for an ideal sector, including:

- Thriving communities
- Reduction in violence/eradication of violence
- Cultural change

The remaining suggestions described what an an ideal sector could work towards:

- Identifying examples of successful campaigns
- Knowledge transfer and exchange/dissemination of knowledge.

Key themes

Several key themes recurred throughout the day regardless of the topic of discussion. These themes are listed below:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Service provision that is responsive to a range of cultural and societal groups
- Importance of not losing sight of sexual assault when discussing domestic and family violence
- Service delivery in rural/regional/remote areas
- Improving connections among services themselves, and services and government, and State and Federal government

- Perpetrators
- Need for appropriate resourcing
- Data collection and usage
- Access to research and data that is usable for workers (eg short overviews of issues, less focus on methodology)

Each of these themes is described in more detail in the following pages.

Prevention and early intervention

Attendees mentioned the need for a focus on prevention and early intervention, and the importance of differentiating between the two concepts, as they are often referred to in tandem. Prevention work, it was said, must be a key part of targeted work with perpetrators of domestic and family violence, as well as a key part of universal education programs within workplaces, schools and learning institutions.

This feedback relates partially to *primary prevention*, which is defined below, particularly in relation to education programs. Primary prevention needs to be considered separately to prevention and early intervention.

Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Individual behaviour change may be the intended result of prevention activity, but such change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, a broader change in the underlying drivers of such violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole. A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children (Change the Story p13, 2015)

When discussing early intervention, attendees noted that there are several critical points at which responses could be better implemented, such as when an intervention order is put in place; when there is court involvement; post-separation; pre and post-release from prison (even if the person being released has not been convicted of a DFV related offence); and with the families and children of victims or those identified as at-risk. It was noted that this type of work needs adequate funding and resourcing which should not be at the expense of funding for the crisis end of the system. Changes to the services provided by SA Health over the last decade were highlighted as contributing to the reduction in early intervention responses as allied health services as a component of acute care response became the focus, rather than the distinct and complementary primary health care services of the 1990s/2000s.

Service provision that is responsive to a range of cultural and societal groups

Attendees flagged a need for services to adequately respond to the needs of a diverse range of people, including:

- People with disability
- Rural/regional/remote people
- Older women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities
- Young women
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women.

Key issues identified for these population groups were:

- LGBTIQ - lack of research on violence and no specialised service in South Australia assisting those in the LGBTIQ community, even though there are high rates of violence for trans and bisexual people.
- Disability – while women with disability are statistically likely to experience violence, they can struggle to access services; may not be believed by mainstream services and as a result need a disability specific service through which to receive support. Further, different circumstances in which abuse occurs for people with disability (e.g. residential and care home settings, in which carers and support staff can be the abusers) and the ways risk can manifest or be assessed when accessing support (e.g. the carer who is the perpetrator may be attending the service with them), need to be taken in to account.
- Older women – responses often fall under the umbrella of ‘elder abuse’ which does not take into consideration the gendered nature of the issue and can locate the violence within the context of cognitive changes associated with ageing, rather than an exacerbation of power and control issues present throughout an abusive relationship.
- Young women/people – recognising the increased risk of violence for young women 15 – 24 (particularly sexual violence), there is a need for specific actions to ensure services can support young people and young women. Responses need to recognise that the risk or vulnerability to violence is not about the women themselves, but a result of their developmental stage, where they are participating more regularly in social activities. This age group is also high risk group in terms of when perpetrator behaviour can begin, and there needs to be interventions available for young people at risk of perpetrating violence. Attendees raised the need for a youth safety strategy or action plan.
- The need for training to enable services to support diverse groups of women and their families was identified. Services recognised that there was a significant opportunity to upskill workers in the sector in this regard. Attendees identified that a ‘one size fits all’ model

was not appropriate, and that generic services could not adequately provide specialist support to these specific communities. There was a general sense that providing 'niche doorways' for these communities would increase the likelihood of engagement and allow for earlier intervention.

Sexual assault and intimate partner violence

There was some concern regarding the lack of inclusion of specific wording around sexual assault in election commitments. Comments from attendees noted that it was important for sexual violence to be a focus, given that women experience sexual violence outside of intimate partner relationships.

Service delivery in rural/regional/remote areas

A range of issues related to the delivery of services in rural/regional/remote areas of South Australia, and the differences in service delivery in metropolitan regions.

It was identified that there is not the full range of services available in rural/regional/remote areas, and that delivering services in these areas is complex.

Difficulties were noted in providing services not just to victims in rural/regional/remote areas, but also to children and families, and to perpetrators.

Concerns were also raised about the visibility of victims and perpetrators in small towns, in that victims could often be readily identified walking into services but that perpetrators could avoid accountability and remain largely invisible.

Local responses informed by local service providers and service users were specified as being important.

Improving connections – among services themselves, between services and government, and State and Federal government

The importance of improving connection between services was identified, as well as the importance of improving connections between services and government, and between State and Federal governments. This was raised in a range of ways – including improving data sharing and integration of existing databases, and in knowledge transfer and exchange. This, it was stated, had the potential to improve early warning signs and facilitate referrals for earlier intervention.

Additionally, it was noted that there could be greater connection between research and policy at both State and Federal levels, as well as greater connection between local service providers and Federal bodies such as Centrelink.

Perpetrators

Perpetrators were identified as a group lacking services and interventions such as mediation, rehabilitation, education, housing, early identification, and support strategies. Attendees noted that there were too few programs for perpetrators, but that it is critical that perpetrators be held accountable and that the onus should not be placed on the victim to monitor the perpetrator's behaviour. For men attending court-mandated perpetrator programs, it was suggested that these perpetrators be held accountable to the courts for their participation. Further, in relation to perpetrator programs, it was stated that these need to have women's specialist domestic and family violence services working alongside, potentially as co-facilitators on programs. Cultural appropriateness was also raised.

Other issues raised included the importance of noting the workplace as a key site in which focus can be placed on perpetrators – for example, by asking the cost to business of employing perpetrators, and calculating the amount of resources used by perpetrators in the workplace to abuse victims. Additionally, it was noted that there must be different responses for perpetrators of sexual assault as opposed to perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

Anecdotal evidence was given that there were often first incidences of DFV following the release of offenders not necessarily imprisoned for a DFV offence. It was suggested that men may be 'disempowered' by Corrections and that during their time in prison their partner may have become empowered. This is a volatile point, and men may try to revert or restore the perceived power dynamic in the family. This could be a key point of intervention.

Need for appropriate resourcing

While it was identified that existing services do excellent work, it was also stated that there was scope for the expansion of services to facilitate sustainability. Areas in which better resourcing would improve responses included prevention, early intervention, education, perpetrator responses, interventions with children, programs in schools and workplaces, and ongoing support for families as violence often does not cease after separation. It was also recognised that many relationships continue amidst the violence and services do not require separation or ending of the relationship to intervene. If there is a separation, there is a need to consider how to best reunify the family, if this is what the victim wants.

Data collection and usage

A number of attendees described a need for increased focus on data systems – “what gets monitored gets done”. This included improving ways in which data is collected, types of data collected, inter-connection of data and databases, and current data collection methods that were collected and used by Government but were not of value to the sector.

Areas were also identified where there was a lack of robust data, such as violence experienced by LGBTIQ people, older women, risk and safety, perpetrators, child protection, and women experiencing homelessness. This related to a similar point raised regarding the need to disaggregate data, so that marginalised communities and minority groups are clearly identified.

Service providers that deliver services were identified as sources where rich data could be collected, but that resourcing this type of infrastructure could be costly. It was also identified that collecting the right data requires asking the right questions prior to beginning collection. Consultation with key communities was stated as key to this process, as was the timing of data collection.

Election Commitments Feedback

Following from the above section on key themes, this section discusses specific issues raised under each of the election commitments based on the groupings of Protection, Infrastructure and Support, and Service Responses.

Protection

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

Attendees saw merit in this proposal, but raised a number of issues. These were based around support for women accessing the scheme, intervention with perpetrators identified through the scheme, and the 'grey areas' around the available details of the scheme at the time of the Roundtable.

It was suggested that supports for women be established, including the inclusion of or referral to a therapeutic space that needs to be locally available, connected to victim support and with the opportunity for counselling, even if no convictions have been disclosed. Seeking this type of information can be a 'red flag' or indicator that there is something going on, and thus represents an early intervention point at which women at risk can be identified.

Interventions with perpetrators were raised as a potential part of this scheme, with the possibility to link with rehabilitation services.

Attendees noted a number of 'grey areas' with the scheme, such as identifying the nature of offences that would be disclosed, disclosure of convictions for minors, the impact on current resourcing, details of how and where the scheme will be accessed, who discloses the information, and who can access information.

Reviewing Police guidelines re: responding to Intervention Order (IO) breaches

It was noted that an intervention order represents a point at which early intervention can occur as it is likely a number of events occurred in the lead up to an application for an intervention order. An intervention order may be a crisis point at which services can engage, which will mean a shift in approach for services and an opportunity to engage with the victim, but also with any children or other family members involved. Supporting family members and children was highlighted as being critical at this point, including supporting women where appropriate to remain in the relationship if they wish, supporting change, and providing absolute safety. Complexities were also identified around contact versus non-contact IOs.

Addressing high numbers of breaches and the need to hold perpetrators accountable were stated as critical, with early and flexible responses to IO breaches needed, as there are currently a high proportion of breaches. It was noted that there is little evidence to suggest that tougher penalties for IO breaches have an effect, and that penalties need to be appropriate for a diverse range of cultures and communities.

Tougher penalties for IO breaches

Reiterating one of the key themes, attendees stated that there is currently very little engagement with men to prevent or stop their violence, but that the early identification of perpetrator behaviours including interactions with mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and gambling, represents an opportunity for early intervention. A need for an IO response model was identified, with the capacity to respond to breaches in a culturally appropriate way. It was also noted that it was important to shift away from the perceived inevitability of IOs being breached.

Additionally, it was noted that perpetrators of sexual assault (outside of DFV) need a separate response, and that penalties for sexual assault should be the same regardless of circumstances or relationship to the victim.

Keeping victims informed

No comments were specific to this commitment.

Gaps in protection services

A number of gaps were identified in protection services including digital and online spaces, minority groups, rural/regional/remote areas, a focus on victims, the overlap of child protection and DFV, and DFV in the workplace.

Digital and online spaces were identified in the context of technology facilitated abuse and the way dating apps can be used to groom victims quickly. A question was raised about how to encourage dating apps to take responsibility around safety.

Young people aged 15-24 were identified as an area in which there is a gap in protection, as well as older women. Overlaps between child protection, DFV and abuse of older women (not under elder abuse) were identified as needing attention.

Rural/regional/remote areas were again identified as areas where gaps exist, particularly in service delivery, as this is a complex area. Strategies need to be developed that recognise the complexities and allow victims to access the full range of complementary services available in the metropolitan area.

A focus on victims was identified as problematic, as overwhelming obligations can be placed on victims e.g. in the child protection system, and in monitoring perpetrators' behaviour where there is shared custody of children. This focus on the victim may lead to a lack of focus on the perpetrator which is likely to allow further victimisation as time goes on.

Gaps were noted in strategies to improve the safety of women in the workplace. It was noted that there needs to be access to paid DFV leave, and a suggestion that DFV be added to the

Equal Opportunity Act as a grounds for discrimination. Additionally, a gap in research was identified regarding perpetrators in the workplace and the cost of this. Further, women are disadvantaged economically by DFV as they are expected to bear the cost. A suggestion was made for health and safety legislation to ensure duty of care, and a safe environment for workers as DFV is often unrecognised in the workplace as a workplace hazard.

Service Responses

Safety hubs

Key themes under this commitment included the need to define the 'hubs', the differences in needs and possibilities for metropolitan and rural/regional/remote clients, and the need to formalise networks between services, including State and Federal services.

Many questions were raised about the nature of the 'hubs', with feedback focussing on more clarification in terms of what the safety hubs would look like, what the model would be, how these would operate, and whether they would require 'bricks and mortar' or constitute a 'virtual hub'. Questions were raised about the implementation of these 'hubs' in rural/regional/remote areas, and the cultural appropriateness of hubs.

It was suggested that features of safety hubs could include:

- Formalisation and interconnection of networks and services already available including local, State and Federal services (requires 'mapping' of what is currently operating)
- Specialist services enhancing generic services
- Real-time information sharing (databases)
- Working together to address risk
- A non-confronting environment
- Addressing multiple issues in one location
- Making it easier for people to access services
- Accessibility for all (LGBTIQ, CALD, ATSI, disability, rural/regional/remote, victims of sexual assault)
- Ensuring those seeking support do not face secondary trauma due to being turned away on the basis of gender identity/sexuality/cultural background/disability
- A whole-of-person approach including the social and emotional wellbeing of the client

- Family Safety Meetings must be linked in.

The benefits of having a physical location included victims not having to tell their story twice and be re-traumatised each time, avoiding the need for access to a computer (assuming a virtual hub is in the digital/online space). Hubs that colocated multiple services would require shared understandings of DFV and gender equity, but may not be appropriate for all members of the community. The visibility of hubs in the community was noted as being both potentially positive and negative – positive in that it makes visible that these services are available; and enables knowledge transfer, but negative in that if you are seen to visit the premises you may be stigmatised; and there may be a diffusion of responsibility.

A ‘virtual’ hub, it was suggested, may not be in an online space, but may be a ‘hub and spoke’ model where services go together to visit a woman in an outreach format.

Possibilities were identified for health services to participate in a hub model, as General Practitioners are often the initial disclosure point of DFV for victims. Localised health facilities and other services, such as Yarrow Place, RASA, child protection, mental health supports, Victim Support Service, SAPOL, Family Violence Legal and corrections, could provide a ‘hub’ point.

It was reiterated that although hubs are worthy of exploration, current services are already working very hard, so it is important to ensure these services are adequately resourced to respond to current workloads. Attendees did not support the funding of the hubs at the expense of other services.

Crisis Accommodation

Crisis accommodation was identified as another area in which sustainable and increased funding was required.

It was noted that there is no choice in crisis accommodation and no continuum of services and that there is always going to be a need for expanding post-violence accommodation.

Motels are currently used as crisis accommodation, however it was noted that these are provided by private entities and put women at significant risk. This type of accommodation also dilutes support as there is no support service onsite.

The recent St Vincent de Paul crisis accommodation facility was put forward as a model that is working.

Other issues raised were the need to hear from marginalised voices, that short term leases would assist in this space, and that pets were an issue in crisis accommodation.

24/7 Crisis hotline

The general consensus was that this hotline was necessary, but that it must be adequately funded and linked to other services such as 1800RESPECT.

Additional suggestions included the opportunity to include actions to make it responsive, to have a separate sexual assault phone line, and to include information about income support.

More targeted rehabilitation for DV perpetrators

General feedback on rehabilitation for perpetrators was that there are not enough programs, and there is a need for more programs and to support organisations already delivering programs. Again, contextual responses were an important factor.

While it was noted that it is important to hold perpetrators accountable, it was also noted that perpetrator programs need to also be accountable.

Corrections was raised as a point at which interventions could occur, e.g. in prisons, and pre- and post-release. It was also suggested these interventions needed to be linked to services outside prisons.

Practical suggestions included the need for women's DV services to work alongside perpetrator programs delivered by uniformed police officers. It was also suggested that 'bricks and mortar' rehabilitation centres be placed in communities incorporating support for drugs and alcohol and gambling, as well as DFV.

While there was discussion of perpetrator programs it was also noted that educating boys and young men was critical to preventing violence against women.

Existing services

Suggestions included ensuring a client focused system, and an advisory group of consumers.

Evaluation

Evaluation was raised as a critical need for existing services and programs. Many services, it was stated, do not evaluate their programs. This results in a lack of understanding about what works and what doesn't.

It was suggested that evaluation must include best practice from other services.

Other

Points raised outside of the above headings included:

- The importance of hearing children and young people's voices without putting them at risk
- Future vision rather than reflective reporting
- A good system should not rely on personal relationships between staff at various services but should be available and equitable for all
- Post-separation education and support is lacking – see TAFE program 'Pathways to Education' for women post-separation
- At a cultural change level there needs to be continued education around community attitudes to lessen the backlash around women's safety
- Services are not currently funded and staff not appropriately trained to deal with the complexity of issues now facing service providers
- Comprehensive approach to improve housing and case management support
- Universal screening and shared frameworks
- Trauma informed practice
- Safety based not health based
- Include health and sexual assault
- Contract management changes – this relationship needs to be collaborative
- Shared framework for understanding pathways for clients/working together
- The voices of clients would enrich the process of developing services.

Infrastructure and Support

A funded peak body for DV services

There was support for the funding of a peak body for DFV services in South Australia. Attendees defined their ideal vision of this as broad, collaborative, and inclusive of other services such as legal services and not necessarily direct service providers. It was suggested that this body could push for research into DFV in marginalised communities.

No interest loans for women's shelters

A range of issues were raised regarding this election commitment, such as:

- The focus on accommodation for women when there is a concurrent need for perpetrator housing once the perpetrator is removed from the home
- A potential disconnect with the 'Staying Home, Staying Safe' initiative which seeks to keep women safe in their own homes
- The potential that this funding could be provided in a different way to organisations other than shelters, as women's services may not necessarily want to take this up as cost of paying these loans off may pass to clientele. It may be better to give these loans to other larger organisations/charities, such as housing organisations to fill this need
- This funding could be better directed towards housing affordability programs
- Concerns that this funding is merely a loan – where will services find funds to repay?
- Crisis accommodation needs to be expanded to rural/regional/remote
- Need to disperse funding throughout a large range of smaller providers rather than small number of large providers as this will facilitate support of specialist providers dealing with marginalised niche communities.

Improving communications (data sharing)

Improving communication between and among services, and state and Federal governments was a key theme. Mainly, data collection and dispersal was considered fundamental to delivering appropriate and adequate services.

Gaps in data included:

- Lack of focus on risk and safety, or complexity
- Lack of disaggregation into minority groups.

A number of issues were identified with regard to the process of data collection, including:

- Lack of clarity regarding why data was being collected, and lack of examination of what was missing
- Data cycles were a key point at which data collection could be evaluated and reflected on – that review and reflection should be built into data cycles
- Broad assumptions based on data without differentiating between different groups
- Language use affects the data collected
- How can we connect data collection to a 24-hour response across the system?

Participants specified that they wanted to see:

- Action based on evidence rather than abstraction
- Integrated databases
- More research bodies looking at different types of data
- Research that informs and changes practice
- Consultation with key communities to establish ways of collecting data that asks the right questions
- Negotiating at Federal level as some KPIs are driven by the Federal government
- Data collection is often driven by government KPIs however services need data that is of value to them. Service providers that deliver the services can inform and be consulted or influence the creation of data.

Personal Protection App

General consensus on this election commitment was that a new app wasn't required and that consideration of use or expansion of existing apps would be supported. Additionally, there were concerns raised about data breaches.

Accommodation

Need for further discussion and engagement to refine these election commitments as part of an overall system reform.

Other Infrastructure and Support

- Reduction in post violence or incidence
- If the victim stays, how to provide family support
- Interested in how to bring national and state together, aware of number of initiatives in terms of infrastructure in terms of training frontline workers in generic organisations. Lived experience and voice of survivors – work has been done and in SA around kitchen table. How can we pick up some of the models in SA? There exists a good opportunity for government to do this.
- Assisting women access victims of crime payments when there is no conviction, and reducing waiting times for the processing of these payments.

Prevention

Key areas identified in prevention included:

Education to change community attitudes

- School curriculum
- Hearing children's voices and ensuring they are not further put at risk
- Need to address cultural understandings of a hierarchy of genders, to challenge patriarchal structures in our society, dangers of stereotypes
- Educating children can lead to them taking the message home and educating older generations
- Education also needs to be provided in special schools that educate children with disabilities as they are infantilised and there is an assumption that people with disability are not sexual beings
- Educating children means having educators that understand gender and violence
- Need to be better connected to ANROWS and translate this research into knowledge on the ground for workers
- Are we teaching everyone what domestic violence actually is?

Early intervention

- Potential to increase opportunities to intervene early
- Courts as site of early intervention
- Post-separation
- Audit of laws in relation to DV and AFV e.g. health and safety laws, animal protection laws, child protection laws
- Corrections – pre and post-release initiatives
- Intersection of racism
- Mainstream vs. minority responses
- Metro vs. rural/regional/remote

Reform

- Need for an overall reform agenda
- How does reform drive community discussion and education?

System

- We need a system that is coordinated and working together
- The system needs to be navigable and easy to access
- Need for a shared framework and shared language
- Funding structures lead to silos – how can we break down barriers and connect services better?
- Good relationships with contract management and service agreements are critical to delivering services ‘on the ground’
- Mapping services would help as its not always clear where to refer users.

Other

Outside the above election commitments were a few remaining points raised by attendees.

Commonwealth connection

- Parenting payments should be available to women experiencing DFV, even if they have a child over 8 years' old
- Women don't know about the crisis payment available
- Newstart needs to be better aligned as people can't get housing assistance on Newstart
- Women who have not entered the system but do have lived experience of DFV should have input, as well as those with experience of the system
- We need to build on previous work.

Survey

A follow-up survey was conducted after the Roundtable to provide the opportunity for those that were not able to attend, as well as those that did attend, to reaffirm that the key themes noted were reflective of the discussions on the day.

Of the 22 survey respondents, 21 agreed that the key themes provided represented the day's conversations accurately. Respondents were asked to specify their top priorities for the proposed reform agenda for family and domestic violence in South Australia. The most commonly identified priorities, starting with those that had the highest consensus across respondents, were:

- Early intervention
- Perpetrator programs/rehabilitation
- Prevention and community education
- Breaking down silos between services and governments and increasing integrated responses
- Ensuring accommodation options, including supporting the victim to remain in the home
- Safety hubs for women needing to access multiple supports
- Increased funding and better resourced services
- Attention paid to children involved in DFV situations
- Review of penalties for Intervention Order breaches.

These priorities are generally consistent with the feedback obtained at the Roundtable, indicating that there is largely broad agreement on key areas for reform and further work.