



Government
of South Australia

Office for Women

Domestic Violence Roundtable

1 March 2019

Murray Bridge

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

(Not for further distribution)

Contents

Introduction	1
Election Commitments Feedback	1
Protection	1
Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme	1
Reviewing Police guidelines / Intervention Order (IO) breaches & Tougher penalties for IO breaches/ Keeping Victims Informed	1
Infrastructure and Support	2
A funded peak body for DV services	2
No interest loans for women's shelters	2
Improving communications (data sharing)	2
Personal Protection App	2
Service Responses	2
Safety hubs	2
Crisis Accommodation	3
24/7 Crisis hotline	3
More targeted rehabilitation for DV perpetrators	3
Other	3
Survey	3



Introduction

On 1 March 2019 the South Australian Government held a roundtable for those working in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector in the Murray Bridge area, to specifically discuss the 2018 election commitments made by the State Government.

This report provides an overview of:

- Points raised in relation to the Government's election commitments discussed under the groupings of Protection, Infrastructure and Support, and Service Responses; and
- Feedback received from a follow up survey sent to all those stakeholders who were invited.

The roundtable attendees were provided with a copy of the Government's commitments, as well as a summary document prepared by the Office for Women (OFW) providing a more detailed overview of the commitments.

Like the other regional roundtables, the Murray Bridge roundtable had a more focused, targeted approach in engaging attendees specifically on the ramifications of, and issues related to, election commitments in their specific locale, with a strong focus on Safety Hubs.

Election Commitments Feedback

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

There was support for the scheme, and feedback indicated that the scheme was working well and was particularly useful for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) workers, SAPOL and in helping to address potential child protection issues.

Reviewing Police guidelines re responding to Intervention Order (IO) breaches & Tougher penalties for IO breaches/ Keeping Victims Informed

SAPOL raised some concerns with the wording of some of the commitments, being of the view that SAPOL responses were already consistent.

Other feedback focused on the inadequacy of court penalties – sentencing and conditions attached to DFV and IO breaches need to be stronger. Suggestions to improve this included education for magistrates.

Victims need to be informed of changes to Orders or other conditions (including release) more rapidly.

In terms of IOs, there was discussion about the need for conditions to be flexible in terms of allowing limited contact between protected person and perpetrator if they are participating in programs to address (and recover from) violence. Orders should not be ceased until appropriate perpetrator program has been completed successfully.

Some services noted that there could be inconsistent responses from SAPOL, particularly in relation to breaches of IOs, which may be an issue of resourcing.

Infrastructure and Support

A funded peak body for DV services

There was support for this commitment and interest in the Coalition's ongoing role. Suggestions included advocacy and monitoring, providing a conduit to report local issues, sharing information, research and tools as well as the possibility of delivering training around DFSV.

No interest loans for women's shelters

Some concerns were raised about how loans would be paid back, and interest was expressed in whether loans could be provided to individual women/families.

In terms of DFSV services, there was strong agreement that more resources are needed across the region – in terms of staff, programs and infrastructure.

Improving communications (data sharing)

There are challenges in terms of data sharing and information sharing guidelines. Agencies need to work together more closely and improve consistency in terms of information sharing generally.

Personal Protection App

There was support for this commitment.

Service Responses

Safety hubs

Participants were supportive of a Safety Hub and generally favoured a WIS style information and referral service in an existing Community or Health Centre. Discussion focused on the need to bring together fragmented or siloed organisations such as Mental Health, Legal Services, DFSV services, Disability and Housing services. There is also an opportunity to link to the new Emergency Department in terms of sexual violence.

A Hub would also allow a range of services to work together in terms of assertive outreach (including tele-services to remote areas) and information sharing, as well as filling current gaps in the provision of services, including to perpetrators.

Participations were keen to avoid duplication of service delivery and emphasised the provision of a coordinated pathway through a network of existing services. Participants considered that

a Safety Hub would focus on a soft entry to services that was confidential and enabled women to access a range of available services, as well as employment and housing pathways.

The role of volunteers and victims with lived experience was considered important, as was ensuring that the Hub was suitable for a range of key population groups, including older women, new arrivals, young people, women with disabilities and women without children. The needs of people with diverse sexuality was also raised.

Crisis Accommodation

Issues related to accommodation for women experiencing DFV relate largely to lack of service support/staffing, particularly given the size of the region. Other issue is a lack of public transport (taxi vouchers would assist) and that many women have to travel to Adelaide for emergency accommodation.

A diversity of accommodation options is needed, as different families have different needs (for example, some will want to stay in the area or in their own homes, while others will want to leave). There is a need for access to safe places and ongoing risk and safety planning, as well as discreet and flexible accommodation responses to victims and their children. Motels are not appropriate for victims or their children. There were concerns in terms of visible transport and accommodation allowing the perpetrator to locate victims, though there was also support for specialist accommodation for women and their children.

Very important that support continues beyond crisis point/s, particularly in terms of safe and ongoing housing. Accommodation options for perpetrators should be considered.

24/7 Crisis hotline

There was no direct feedback provided on this commitment.

More targeted rehabilitation for DV perpetrators

There was an identified need for greater resources to be targeted towards community perpetrator intervention programs in regional areas, including pathways to education and employment. Earlier intervention is needed, in terms of both programs and ongoing support beyond accommodation.

Holistic (and culturally appropriate) wrap around responses to perpetrators are needed. Non means-tested support/counselling for families on re-unification is required if needed. Supports for perpetrators must not conflict with the services provided to women and their children at the Safety Hub.

Other

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

Primary prevention initiatives need to focus on young (primary school) aged children; there needs to be a focus on awareness, cultural and generational change, and schools and community as key sites of change in terms of attitudes towards violence against women.

(Schools also flagged as a good point at which to make contact with women/children experiencing violence). Programs aimed at young people were considered important. Early intervention was also flagged as a significant gap in terms of focus, with too much energy spent on crisis responses rather than addressing violence earlier. Bystander education as considered important.

There was discussion around coercive control legislation, as well as the need for there to be ongoing dialogue with victims about their lived experience and the pathways they utilised in accessing support and help through crisis to recovery.

Health services, ranging from GPs to mental health and drug and alcohol services need a better understanding of DFVS and trauma informed responses to violence, for perpetrators, victims and children.

There were several notes made by attendees in terms of the need for child care or facilities for children while women are dealing with services, SAPOL, courts and so on.

Survey

A follow-up survey was conducted after the Roundtable to provide the opportunity to affirm that the key themes noted above were reflective of the discussions on the day.

Three responses were received. All three agreed that the feedback presented was accurate.

Respondents were also asked to identify their priorities in terms of the ongoing reform agenda for family and domestic violence in South Australia. Responses included the need for support for victims to stay in their community (including emergency accommodation) and a local on call service; the need for holistic supports for victims and perpetrators, and the need for more perpetrator programs.