

BEN CARROLL MP

STATE MEMBER FOR NIDDRIE

28 May 2015

Royal Commission into Family Violence
PO Box 535
FLINDERS LANE
MELBOURNE VIC 8009

Dear Commissioners,

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

I write and make this submission on behalf of the electorate of Niddrie and my local community to highlight the seriousness of family violence and to underline the need for decisive action to combat this issue.

The electorate of Niddrie is in the North West Metropolitan region, which reported the highest rate of family violence incidents (21,578) by police region in Victoria in 2014. Within the North West Metropolitan region, the local government areas of Brimbank and Moonee Valley which cover the Niddrie electorate reported 2,245 and 944 incidents respectively in the same time period. From 2013 to 2014, there were 99,968 intervention orders filed in the Magistrates Court across the state of Victoria.

The incidence of family violence is increasing rapidly. As evidenced in the Crime Statistics Agency's report (2015), the number of family violence incidents recorded by Victoria Police increased 70.3% from 2010 and 8.2% since 2013.

These incidents disproportionately affect the women in our communities, who are 52.8% more likely to be a victim of crimes against the person than men. Indigenous women are also overrepresented in these statistics, with indigenous women hospitalised for non-fatal family violence assault at 34 times the rate of other women (2011-12). Outside of its very real human impact, family violence has an estimated \$13.6 billion cost to the Australian economy each year, and an estimated cost of \$3.4 billion to the Victorian economy.



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In March I joined my local community at Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School in Keilor East for a forum, entitled '**Say No to Family Violence**', organised by the Keilor East Airport West Uniting Church in my electorate. The forum was addressed by Fiona McCormack, CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria, then Acting Chief Police Commissioner Tim Cartwright and Nathan DeGuara, Manager of the Men's Referral Service, as well as the Hon. Fiona Richardson MP, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

Representatives from the City of Moonee Valley, the City of Brimbank and Victoria Police Divisional Commander, Michael Hermans were also in attendance, demonstrating their genuine interest in finding community solutions to tackle this issue.

The prevalence of family violence in my local community and communities right across Victoria is extremely worrying; however it was heartening to see the high attendance of over a hundred locals at the recent '**Say No to Family Violence**' forum committed to eradicating family violence.

The statistics around family violence which we are presented with are truly staggering, and I can only imagine the real effects of this issue on women and children who must deal with its impacts on a daily basis. At the recent community forum, Acting Chief Police Commissioner Tim Cartwright estimated that there are at least 35,000 incidents of domestic violence which are not reported each year – adding up to around 1 in 3 incidents which go under the radar. Family violence is the most prevalent form of violence perpetrated against women, even in the year 2015. It is difficult to conceive that:

- 1 woman per week dies at the hands of her present or former partner;
- 1 in 6 women have suffered sexual assault or physical abuse at the hands of a partner or former partner; and
- Approximately 80% of family violence victims have never reported their abuse to police.

This only shows how incredibly pervasive family violence is, across all walks of life. This is not an issue that has a quick-fix solution – it requires societal change and a holistic approach to prevention, justice and service provision.

I am pleased that the Royal Commission will focus on how the system responds to family violence - from the courts to police and corrections, to child protection and support services and most particularly, the government will implement every recommendation of the Royal Commission.

I am incredibly proud to be part of a government that is working towards addressing family violence through the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and a newly announced Family Violence Index to monitor and evaluate the prevalence of family violence in Victoria. Finally, I was pleased recently to join colleagues in the Victorian Parliament in the establishment of a new bipartisan friendship group committed to raising awareness of domestic violence in our community. As a member of the Victorian Parliament I am committed to making this issue front and center in my community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ben" and the last name "Carroll" clearly distinguishable.

BEN CARROLL MP
State Member for Niddrie
Parliamentary Secretary for Justice