

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence Rotary Club of Melbourne

PURPOSE

To provide an overview of Rotary Club of Melbourne Club activities and approaches that relate to your terms of reference. We have two core objectives in the domestic violence area

- To develop club programs that add value and are leveraged to produce change. We favour a series of small interventions that can be evaluated and we look at entire value chains to identify the scope to remove barriers to delivery and to improve information systems
- To extend our experiences to other Rotary Clubs and learn from their experiences. To work within the world wide Rotary movement to exchange ideas and experiences with interventions that support change. The scope to draw on experience in different cultures while it creates difficulties may also be one way to cut through to core solutions. The domestic violence problems are worldwide and the important solutions will not necessarily emerge first in Victoria or Australia.

BACKGROUND

Rotary worldwide has 1.2 million members in 34,000 clubs in over 200 countries. We have close links with the UN and were involved in the development of the UN charter. Our leadership of the “eradicate polio” campaign is an example of how we can mobilize resources and skills to address major social issues.

The Rotary Club of Melbourne is the oldest Rotary Club in Australia. We have a long history of addressing social needs and identifying and helping to close various gaps in programs and we have within our membership a range of professionals willing to contribute their skills.

Several years ago we moved into the homelessness area after consulting the community and developing key partnerships. The approach we used has been developed as “Rotary Connects” and we are now making this available to other Rotary Clubs. The framework emphasises community consultation, the identification of issues of concern and then the scope for Rotary to work with community groups to add value.

Two years ago we supported in a minor way the “Violence Free Family” behavioural change project and decided that we would provide ongoing support for domestic violence programs through a series of small projects that could be evaluated and that would draw on our member’s skills as well as funding. We also identified a lack of communication between Rotary clubs in Australia and around the world. A number of Clubs are doing interesting things and the Rotary movement needs to find ways to ensure we build on each rather than reinvent solutions.

Last year we decided to apply the Rotary Connects process to family violence and this has led us to some views about the system that would appear to relate to your terms of reference. The process is still ongoing and we will document the results in some detail later this year.

OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SYSTEM

The attached Issues Summary Statement was prepared for a recent Club forum on these matters. We see the domestic violence problem as a worldwide problem and we doubt there is evidence of major successes in countering it. The system in Victoria seems to us to be under resourced at many levels and we assume that many submissions you receive will argue the case for resources. We also suspect that these submissions will assume that the current system is capable of addressing the problems that are emerging.

It is our initial view that to add resources without addressed the fragmentation, lack of coordination, and the need to evaluate the system across various boundaries will do little more than keep all those involved busy treating symptoms and devoting resources to overcoming/bypassing barriers that would be better removed.

In our discussions people have put to us that the smart response is to address underlying causes. However there are obviously multiple causes and overlapping symptoms so while we agree we need system change we doubt whether many of the views about causation will lead to anything like a simple cure. One worrying element in the data is the attitude of younger persons. Our view would be that a reversal of these attitudes to violence is likely to be a lead indicator for overall improvement in the system.

Our approach is to find areas where we can add value and assist partners with small projects that can end and be evaluated. At the same time we propose to leverage each project by adding research to highlight the need for system improvements. We have recently supported a submission to expand affordable housing for victims of domestic violence. Should this find favour we would consult further with our partners on how this might be used to provide long term as well as short term benefits.

CURRENT PROJECTS

We have two projects defined at this point and a number of others are being developed for approval later this year.

The first relates to action to reform processes and cultures in business groups and in community service organisations like Rotary. There are a number of approaches to “bystander” programs and we plan to work with selected organisations to develop these ideas. Clearly the problem of identifying perpetrators and calling them and assisting change is a challenge within small groups and business groups and we feel Rotary needs to do what it can to facilitate this process

The second project we are pursuing is to analyse the value chain for the mens behavioural change programs from point of referral by the courts and or police through the lengthening queues and through the change programs. In part these programs are being researched effectively but the focus is not always across the system and we expect to be able to produce views on this by early 2016. Central to this project is research on the impact of the lengthening queues on perpetrators and we are finalising an agreement to intervene in this process by working with a partner with the expertise to contact a sample of persons in the queue regularly until they enter a program. This work will be evaluated and fed into the value chain project. The value chain project will test an approach that has worked in many areas and because it will span various system boundaries, is likely to highlight opportunities for system and policy change.

USING THE WORLDWIDE ROTARY SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THESE CHANGES

A number of Rotarians from several of clubs including ours are developing a Rotarian Action Group. In addition to providing a focus to encourage action and collaboration between Clubs. We expect this group will identify examples of best practice from the many Rotary groups in Australia and in other countries that are addressing these problems. We also see this as a useful way to encourage Clubs to adopt programs that address domestic violence programs to meet challenges in their local communities.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - A ROTARY CONNECTS PROJECT BY THE ROTARY CLUB OF MELBOURNE STATUS REPORT May 2015
(Domestic Violence Sub Committee of the Community Welfare Committee)**

The sub-committee has conducted interviews with a number of Community and Business groups to identify issues of community concern and opportunities for Rotary involvement. The project is continuing and a final report is expected in August 2015.

ISSUES SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ROTARY

1. Domestic violence is seen by many as a major problem in many countries. Australia seems to be ranked as a middle ranked country worse placed than the UK and many European countries but well ahead of many developing countries. There is a growing community (and political) consensus for action

- *Rotary is unlikely to solve this problem but it needs to be involved.*
- *This involvement needs to be leveraged to produce value and balanced against other Rotary community programs*

2. There are entrenched barriers to recognition and awareness particularly at the level of individuals and groups including business groups

- *Resist the twin temptations to deny the importance of the DV problem or to conclude that some crusader has found the path to salvation.*
- *Build cultures that support change and, where there are choices, avoid resistance by targeting projects that address problems where there is widespread support for change.*

3. Existing systems and solutions are under resourced, fragmented, and seem unlikely to contain the domestic violence problem unless they change. Increases in resources need to be combined with action to remove barriers close gaps in existing systems and manage end impacts on victims and perpetrators.

- *Projects should add specific value that can be evaluated and leveraged to support wider system reforms. (This includes projects that add value directly and research and evaluation projects that aim to add value to other programs or inform key policy debates).*
- *A series of small leveraged projects makes more sense than one big solution. Projects that seek ongoing funding with no defined end point need to be avoided*
- *Projects that recognise and draw on the skills of Rotarians should be preferred over projects that do not.*
- *Projects should not depend on long term Rotary funding. Projects that seek funds to expand or maintain existing solutions need to be avoided unless they can be shown to be key to system change.*

3.1 Leading organisations are developing programs that address the need for cultural change and there is growing research into various “bystander programs” that aim to build a shared responsibility and equip individuals and groups to notice, interpret and respond to domestic violence events.

- *Work with organisations that are developing such packages*
- *Rotary needs to ensure that its house and procedures are in order.*

3.2 While there are opportunities to contribute to many programs to assist victims many opportunities need to be developed to meet the need for involvement and evaluations and leveraging. Some seek funding and not much else.

- *Projects need to focus on both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Programs that address homelessness, children in need, drugs, may share common problems and solutions and be best picked up by or with other groups.*
- *Work with organisations to ensure they understand our requirement to not fund ongoing activities, to be able to evaluate and leverage impacts.*

3.3 The system which refers men to behavioural change programs is generating drop outs and large queues. Various weaknesses and gaps need to be addressed

- *Rotary through the VFF project is a major innovator in this space. RCM has identified a major opportunity to add value across these systems with a pilot study to research the impact of the growing queues and a wider report on other system and policy gaps that need to be addressed.*

EXAMPLES OF OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH AGENCIES.

CRITERIA

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Projects to improve awareness in organisations

1. **Domestic violence awareness** - Work with organisations that are developing such packages and reviewing their internal procedures. Consider the application of these ideas within Rotary

Projects that assist victims (still under development and assessment)

2. **Mothers and children** who are victims of domestic violence - supervised outings to assist them to recovery
3. Children in residential traumatised as a result of domestic violence - increase and evaluate clinical services – benchmark and highlight best practice solutions.
4. **Communication** between research groups and clinicians treating patients – evaluate needs and delivery options – assist with distribution
Home Safety - Safe Futures Safe T card
The use of affordable housing to assist victims of family violence

Projects to manage perpetrators

5. RCM contributed to the computerised mens behavioural change program being developed by Violence Free Families pilot trials are currently being evaluated (completed)
6. **A review of the growing use of mens behavioural change programs.** There are two elements to this project.
 - This project will analyse the value chain that links perpetrators the courts policy the selection for entry to programs, the management of the now long queues for access and the end effectiveness of this process. We believe that this project will test the value of using basic value chain analysis to find and propose the removal of gaps and barriers that have evolve in current responses.
 - An essential element of this project is a **pilot bridging program** to research the impact of the delays faced by persons referred to these programs by police and the courts (currently over 12 months). When combined with the value chain analysis this should new perspectives to the analysis.

WERE DOES AUSTRALIA RANK? OLD UN DATA

