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**Submission to Justice Marcia Naevé**

**Royal Commission into Family Violence**

I was wondering if you are aware of the 'One Safe Place' model currently operating within the United States, and the European Union. I was working with an organisation providing support and services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Derry, Northern Ireland, before arriving back in Melbourne in August 2014. The organisation I was employed with is Foyle Women's Aid, while there, I prepared the business case and funding submissions to create the first 'One Safe Place' centre for Ireland, which is to be based in Derry. While researching and preparing the project proposal, I was so impressed with how successful in providing the full range of support for victims and their families the model catered for within the one building. I have decided to incorporate this as part of my Master of Research programme which I will be undertaking at RMIT under supervisors Dr Susie Costello and Dr Caroline Norma in July, which will explore what gaps the 'One Safe Place' model could fill in Victoria. So far, the push has been for coordination rather than a one stop shop approach.

The One Safe Place centre model is the bringing together of a multi-agency task force, under one roof, dedicated to providing coordinated services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Within the United States, the One Safe Place Model has proven successful in over 70 communities across the country and has been designated as a best practice model for domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The One Safe Place model has proven to have contributed towards a major reduction in domestic violence related homicides, drastic reductions in recidivism and increases in successful criminal prosecutions and civil legal solutions across the United States.

Similar to the MARAC (Multi-Agency-Risk-Assessment-Conference) system in operation throughout the United Kingdom. The MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between

representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

This 'One Safe Place' model offers the opportunity to create a multi-agency co-location approach providing a full wrap-around service for victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, elder abuse and other vulnerable people.

The 'One Safe Place' provides a secure working environment for all existing legal, judicial, social and support agency staff. By co-housing all agencies together in the one building provides a dedicated one-stop-shop, within a well-trained coordinated support structure providing a broad range of specialist services including, a family violence police unit, corrections, legal and court support, advocacy, dependency and mental health issues, housing, childcare, health care, social security and domestic violence support services.

Research for the project in Derry, highlighted, that victims may have to visit 27 different agencies in a bid to flee a life of fear, travelling from one building to another, having to repeat her story to each person she meets just so that she may be directed to someone that will help her access services. Within the 'One Safe Place', victims will only have to tell their story once, with all the necessary agencies in the one place. There is evidence to support that having to repeat what happened over and over can heighten the effects of the trauma the victim has been exposed to, this can be difficult and compound the trauma, if there are children involved then this is magnified again, making the recovery period more difficult.

Therefore, the 'One Safe Place' concept seeks to marshal all available resources within the community into a coordinated, centralised, service delivery system, with accountability to victims and survivors for the effectiveness of the model. It is, at its core, a concept that increases community capacity while also providing diverse, culturally competent services to victims and their children from a single location.

This model offers a unique opportunity to enhance existing service delivery within Victoria and a model that can be expanded as a model of best practice across Australia linking in to other centres within the United States and the United Kingdom. There is a framework currently being introduced which includes the Justice Centre

model within Victoria, this framework can be tweaked to incorporate the additional services required for introducing the 'One Safe Place'.