



Issues Paper – Royal Commission into Family Violence

The Royal Commission wants to hear about programs, public education campaigns, and other forms of community engagement in business, local government, workplaces, schools, sporting teams, local communities and community organisations which aim to reduce and prevent family violence and ameliorate its effects. We are interested in hearing about local, inter-state or overseas initiatives of this kind. We also want to hear about research evaluating such initiatives.

Initiatives to address family violence within our state's public and private institutions, organisations, businesses and in the media are crucial to fostering positive attitudes, addressing misconceptions, and dealing with issues that may give rise to violence before violence occurs.

We want to hear from individuals or organisations who have sought to identify and address these circumstances and conditions.

Question One

Are there other goals the Royal Commission should consider?

The commission needs to consider a goal of establishing technology that will capture in real time data that will enable a deeper understanding of the relationship between behaviours that lead to family violence, technology, user engagement, data capture and solution/program design.

A fundamental change in the approach to data capture could greatly improve timeliness of issues identification and lead to increased effectiveness of solution design and implementation.

One of the challenges of large scale social health programs is the time required to; identify, design solutions, implement, review and report. A modern enhanced approach to this process could see rapid and frequent cycles of the process allowing improved allocation of resources discharged to the issue area in weeks instead of months or years.

Question Two

The Royal Commission wants to hear about the extent to which recent reforms and developments have improved responses to family violence, and where they need to be expanded or altered.

No Response: We do not have specific information to assist with this query

Question Three

Which of the reforms to the family violence system introduced in the last ten years do you consider most effective? Why? How could they be improved?

No Response: We do not have specific information to assist with this query

Question Four

If you or your organisation have been involved in programs, campaigns or initiatives about family violence for the general community, tell us what these involved and how they have been evaluated.

Our organisations have been involved in a collaborative pilot to specifically target and assist fathers and families in the early stages of parenthood. These early stage pilot programs are aimed at increasing connectedness of fathers with their families, their communities and the services organisations that exist to support them in time of hardship.

Our study into the core reasons for negative family behaviour including family violence has identified a key common denominator – isolation.

For this reason we have developed community pilot programs to connect, engage and assist our target demographic and understand if reduction of isolation will lead to reduction of negative family behaviours.

When rolled out nationally to scale with specific digital infrastructure, the evaluation of these programs will be driven by the large amounts of captured user data that enables; thousands of impressions of issues, effectiveness of program solutions, and opportunities for program improvement

Question Five





If you or your organisation have been involved in observing or assessing programs, campaigns or initiatives of this kind, we are interested in your conclusions about their effectiveness in reducing and preventing family violence.

We are in the process of gathering data on micro-community programs and their impact on family and community wellbeing. These programs are specifically targeted at fathers and their children and provide a safe facilitated environment for them to engage with others in their community.

Our opinion is that there needs to be increased resources provided to positive preventative programs that are inclusive and relevant to the needs of the target demographic.

We need to strategically invest in a more intimate understanding of the chain of events leading to family violence and trial programs at the inception of the family (new fathers and new mothers).

Question Six

What circumstances, conditions, situations or events, within relationships, families, institutions and whole communities, are associated with the occurrence or persistence of family violence?

The key challenges of parenthood,

- Isolation
- Frustration
- Disruption to lifestyle
- Anxiety & Depression
- Lack of social connectedness/community
- Lack of key information on who can help, what can help, what to do and who to speak to
- Lack of a holistic approach to family support – ie a need for collaboration between key service providers that each target different aspects of the issue

Question Seven

What circumstances and conditions are associated with the reduced occurrence of family violence?

The key elements of health communities,

- Positive social interaction with family, friends and community
- Communication
- Education
- Peer and community support
- Opportunities to 'take a break'
- Access to community services
- Access to relevant information
- Collaboration between various providers who each target different aspects of the issue

Question Eight

Tell us about any gaps or deficiencies in current responses to family violence, including legal responses. Tell us about what improvements you would make to overcome these gaps and deficiencies, or otherwise improve current responses.

The fundamental perceived deficiencies in the current approach to family violence are;

- i. The lack of effective engagement and communication with the key demographic of current or potential perpetrators. Men.
- ii. Over allocation of resources toward campaigns resulting in under allocation of resources towards resources effective program implementation
- iii. A generally negative approach to campaigns that draw the audience attention to the problems rather than potential solutions and benefits

The emotional climate of impending fatherhood is conducive to behaviour change. It is the point in time when men are most likely to accept advice, recommendations or support from peers.

Our suggested approach is to provide more opportunities for new fathers to; connect, engage and explore positive role models of fatherhood. Our experience to date would suggest this approach works when done collaboratively with respected community organisations such as Rotary.

Question Nine

Does insufficient integration and co-ordination between the various bodies who come into contact with people affected by family violence hinder the assessment of risk, or the effectiveness of (early intervention, crisis and ongoing) support provided, to people affected by family violence? If so, please provide examples.





Yes, we strongly believe that organisations need to be led by government to collectively take a step back and understand the context of their support services in order to increase collaboration, understanding of holistic solution design and improve efficiencies and program effectiveness.

The current environment promotes all organisations to gather their own data on their target demographic and develop isolated solutions.

A key challenge in this scenario is that replication of questions targeting the end users of the services in order to understand the issues.

Governments should invest in platforms to enable family support and service organisations to collaborate and share key data for issue identification and solution design.

Question Ten

What practical changes might improve integration and co-ordination? What barriers to integration and co-ordination exist?

Government funded opt-in infrastructure programs for service organisations to leverage digital infrastructure that substantially reduce the cost of service delivery through scalable methodologies. This would allow organisations to reduce their focus on attracting funding for isolated solution testing and increase the efficiency of a collaborative solution design.

Question Eleven

What are some of the most promising and successful ways of supporting the ongoing safety and wellbeing of people affected by violence? Are there gaps or deficiencies in our approach to supporting ongoing safety and wellbeing? How could measures to reduce the impact of family violence be improved?

Healthy micro-communities are the core to supporting ongoing safety and wellbeing of children and families. Those that have been exposed to family violence require social rehabilitation and acceptance. This process happens in micro-communities. Key areas that governments can facilitate and grow the number of healthy micro-communities is in strategic platform design and collaboration with organisations that create and support micro-communities.

Question Twelve

If you, your partner or a relative have participated in a behaviour change program, tell us about the program and whether you found it effective. What aspects of the program worked best? Do you have criticisms of the program and ideas about how it should be improved?

A shining example of positive behavioural change programs (not necessarily those related to violence) is the Rotary leadership sponsor model where potential/emerging community leaders are taken under the wings of senior respectable community figures and mentored through to success.

The most effective aspect of this leadership model is empowerment and focus on the potential outcomes. Behaviours are guided towards achieving the outcome and individuals are supported in areas of weakness to achieve a shared success outcome for the individual, the mentors, and the associated organisations

Question Thirteen

If you, your partner or a relative have been violence and changed their behaviour, tell us about what motivated that change. Was a particular relationship, program, process or experience (or combination of these) a key part of the change? What did you learn about what caused the violent behaviour?

No Response: We do not have specific information to assist with this query

Question Fourteen

To what extent do current processes encourage and support people to be accountable and change their behaviour? To what extent do they fail to do so? How do we ensure that behaviour change is lasting and sustainable?

Without an intimate understanding of the environment with respect to part a) and part b) of question 14 we feel that we only have enough information to provide an opinion on part c) How do we ensure that behaviour change is lasting and sustainable?

Behaviour change is only lasting and sustainable in an environment of healthy and supportive accountability. This can consist and often is a unique mix of the following; friends, family, mentors, business relationships, and social networks

Question Fifteen

If you or your organisation have offered a behaviour change program, tell us about the program, including any evaluation of its effectiveness which has been conducted.

No Response: We do not have specific information to assist with this query





Question Sixteen

If you or your organisation have been involved in observing or assessing approaches to behaviour change, tell us about any Australian or international research which may assist the Royal Commission. In particular, what does research indicate about the relative effectiveness of early intervention in producing positive outcomes?

Yes the following document and outcomes should be considered:

https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/SPRCFile/42_Report_QCOSS_ReviewPaper.pdf

“Cost Effectiveness of Early Intervention Programs for Queensland”

November 2007 Report prepared for the Queensland Council of Social Service Inc by the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Kylie Valentine and Ilan Katz

The best service provision for vulnerable families with less intensive needs takes the form of: programs that provide high quality centre-based care, with additional services for families as they need them. The most effective way to ensure universal provision of early education and care is to make it free, available at times that allow parents to meet work and other obligations, and located in integrated family centres or schools.

High quality centre based care is characterised by highly trained, well-paid staff with low child: staff ratios.

Proven programs are intensive, comprehensive and flexible.

Both universal services and targeted programs should be included as components of an early intervention strategy

There is a growing body of evidence that a very large number of individual, neighbourhood and broad socio-cultural risk factors are associated with poor outcomes for children and families.

Risk assessment is costly and inefficient. Rather than relying on risk assessments for identifying the most vulnerable families, a system involving outreach and engagement of ‘hard to reach’ individuals and communities is more appropriate.

Service systems need to be comprehensive, culturally safe and accessible, with multiple entry points and the capacity to meet families’ immediate material needs.

Integration strategies are necessary to ensure a comprehensive, accessible system of services that can link families to what they need.

The workforce providing services to children and families should be professionally trained and be well remunerated.

There are a number of evidence based programs and service models that have demonstrated effectiveness in addressing family problems and difficulties. However, relationships between service providers and families, and the capacity to adjust programs to meet family needs, are also integral to successful recruitment and retention of families.

Question Seventeen

Are there specific cultural, social, economic, geographical or other factors in particular groups and communities in Victoria which tend to make family violence more likely to occur, or to exacerbate its effects? If so, what are they?

Question Eighteen

What barriers prevent people in particular groups and communities in Victoria from engaging with or benefiting from family violence services? How can the family violence system be improved to reflect the diversity of people’s experiences?

It is widely accepted that men do not actively seek support readily. This is the single most negative barrier to program effectiveness.

Recent studies demonstrate the emotional climate of impending fatherhood is conducive to behaviour change. It is the point in time when men are most likely to accept advice, recommendations or support from peers.

Our suggested approach is to provide more opportunities for new fathers to; connect, engage and explore positive role models of fatherhood. Our experience to date would suggest this approach works when done collaboratively with respected community organisations such as Rotary.

Question Nineteen

How can responses to family violence in these groups and communities be improved? What approaches have been shown to be most effective?

Research demonstrates there are a number of isolated worthy initiatives across Australia that would be enhanced through coordinated collaboration.

Our recommendation is that this approach could be facilitated and enhanced by the technology that is currently being developed and tested.

Question Twenty

Are there any other suggestions you would like to make to improve policies, programs and services which currently seek to carry out the goals set out above?





Establishment of a national symposium of service providers in this field.

Question Twenty-one

The Royal Commission will be considering both short term and longer term responses to family violence. Tell us about the changes which you think could produce the greatest impact in the short and longer term.

The immediate changes that would produce the greatest impact is relieving the key challenges of parenting by getting fathers and families in to healthy micro-communities.

The long term changes that would produce the greatest impact is getting fathers and families to remain connected to a healthy micro-community group throughout the life of the family.

(Peer moderation, enabling fathers to connect with other fathers in a micro-community group that all have a shared ownership of the group).

Our submission is fundamentally based on the assumptions that the following are significant contributors to family violence; The key challenges of parenthood,

- Isolation
- Frustration
- Disruption to lifestyle
- Anxiety & Depression
- Lack of social connectedness/community
- Lack of key information on who can help, what can help, what to do and who to speak to
- Lack of a holistic approach to family support – ie a need for collaboration between key service providers that each target different aspects of the issue

Our submission is fundamentally based on the assumptions that the following are aspects of healthy micro-communities

- Positive social interaction with family, friends and community
- Communication
- Education
- Peer and community support
- Opportunities to 'take a break'
- Access to community services
- Access to relevant information
- Collaboration between various providers who each target different services

Final Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opinion on what is major challenge facing families in Australia. We hope to hear from you and have the opportunity to present our findings on ways to successfully create healthier communities and reducing violence.

Alan Lonsdale

President
Rotary Club of Manningham
PO Box 180
Doncaster East 3109

