

1. Are there other goals the RC should consider?

How the Family Court treats the parties during Property separation and Divorce proceedings – the offender is still able to manipulate and exert pressure in his favour

How the staff that deal with Child Support treat the paying spouse – they have had me in tears

2. The RC 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.

My experience – counsellors agreed as did the Court appointed Child representative that my spouse should have counselling but it was his decision to refused – there was no cohesion for him to receive the help he needed

3. 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?

I am not aware of any reform being effective or in any way assisted myself. Incidents reported to the local police officer (one man station) didn't appear to make any difference.

Getting a restraining order was so stressful and difficult to even get an appointment; and then I was advised by the police (metro) not to take that action because it would most likely further escalate the situation but rather phone them if a situation developed. They advise in my situation was possibly the better course.

4. 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.

Not applicable

5. 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 the effectiveness in reducing and preventing family violence.

I recently read that *“change is possible because violence is a choice, men make a choice to use violence and abuse”* really? was my reaction – where is the “choice” when they have lost their temper and struck out? I don’t agree you are going to reprogram this behaviour by good examples and lessons on choice.

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

Anger, control, and dominance in every aspect they seek dependence by their spouse – financial, confidence, friendships, sex.

7. What circumstances and conditions are associated with the reduced occurrence of family violence?
- 8.

When you comply and submit; surrender your identity.

9. 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.

I appreciate that one spouse can potentially make up stories about the other to gain sympathy, power, etc. but surely there should be counselling available to access the level of truth between the parties and put mechanisms in place to protect both when dealing with the legal system. My spouse exerted so much pressure and tension when we had to mediate I had to leave the room, I am usually a confident, motivated person but when in contact with him in close proximity fear gets the better of me and I couldn’t cope.

In Primary Schools we teach Sexuality Education lets incorporate “abuse in all its forms” let our children know that this is not acceptable behaviour, let out teenagers realise manipulation/abuse is not just violence.

10. 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.

I went to Relationships Australia and the Catholic University for assistance and advice and although I received an outlet to talk it didn't solve or improve the situation. In retrospect I didn't receive the further assistance and guidance I needed; I don't know if I was not identified as at risk but I did need assistance to navigator through all the hurdles and I didn't get it.

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

It's like needing a mentor, I imagine that you would get in a support group; not personally connected but can point the way through the maze; can identify available services and advocate on your behalf. It's not like to can put on a resume reason for leaving last job – abuse by spouse.

12. 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?

Make obtaining a Restraining Order less stressful and make it mean something. THE ABC this week in a news story talked of some type of GPS tracking system – if the “victim” could receive an alert that they was an immediate threat, they potentially could put themselves out of harm's way. Instead of walking around a corner and having them jump out at you in a public space, just to instil fear.

13..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?

I desperately wanted him to enter into an Anger Management program but it was his decision and he refused to take part in any form of counselling, even though he had been identified by professional as needing it.

13. If you, your partner or a relative have been violent 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?

The behaviour perhaps bore out of frustration with life remains unabated and manifests itself in his daily dealings with people in the Community, be it manipulation or just a condescending attitude.

14. 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?

I haven't seen any change in his behaviour; it is still manipulative and hurtful; he still has control in some spheres as family sided with him and supported him regardless and his "friends" are unwilling to speak up

15. 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.

Relationships Australia did offer a plan but this was never suggested to him in his dealings with them – it wasn't their place to.

16. 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?

Not applicable

17. 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?

Small country town mentality with a one manned police station that has to keep the status quo but is reluctant to take action. Feeling powerless.

18. 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?

Isolation in small country towns, lack of public transport to even attend larger centres to seek advice. Local Council could play a much bigger role as part of their Community Services programs agenda.

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

Knowing you have a voice and not being judged for it.

20. 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?

There are so many areas in your life affected by spousal abuse/violence that still go unrecognised especially financial. The credit card is in your name so the Court

says it's your bill BUT the house is in your name and it gets split. Explain how that is fair and equitable?

21. 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.

Go to the Primary Schools and give Age Appropriate guidelines; explain to our older teens that him have several sexual partners while in a relationship isn't because you had an argument about the rent and stressed him.

We force our drink driver offenders to undertake driver re-education why can't we do it for Family Violence (because it isn't recognised in Law) so correct this and make people realise that violence within the home isn't any different to violence in the street which you would not hesitate to report.