

*Paul Edbrooke, State Member for Frankston's submission into Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence which was established by the Andrews Labor Government.*

I was able to attend a domestic violence forum held in my electorate earlier this year, with over 600 other people. In the forum there were many speakers sharing the same objective to raise awareness about early prevention of domestic violence. The forum featured a speech by Australian of the year, Rosie Batty.

Many of the issues discussed at the forum will be included in another submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence by Women's Health in the South East. I concur with their recommendation that a preventative and educational long term approach is required to prevent family violence.

Specifically, gender inequality needs to be widely discussed in an effort to break down the barriers. We need to address violence against women, and we need both structural and cultural change which results in gender equality in our personal relationships, community and within our society.

According to the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV), *Domestic violence happens in all kinds of relationships, including:*

- intimate: partners, lovers, husband and wife, ex-partners
- older people and their children (elder abuse)
- other family members, including step-parents
- parents and their teenage or adult children
- friends
- people with disabilities and their carers

When domestic violence occurs between adults in heterosexual relationships, research shows that men are most likely to be the perpetrators and women the victims.

When the violence occurs against children in families, research shows that parents and step-parents are most likely to be the perpetrators.

Children and young people may also experience violence when they live with and/or witness violence between other family members.

I recently met with Community Support Frankston. They have an incredible caseworker, whose role is to assist women leaving unhealthy violent relationships by helping provide emergency relief, working budgets, referrals and advice on housing and schooling for their children. Sadly this person is at risk of losing of her position because of Federal Government Funding cuts.

In relation to Frankston specifically, the Frankston Magistrates court sees the highest number of family violence related cases. It has a Specialist Family Violence Service and recently it has increased mention days for intervention orders from three to four per week.

**Rates of family violence are double the Victorian average in the City of Frankston, which is ranked top of all metropolitan Local Government Areas (LGAs) for incidences of family violence (Victoria Police 2013).**

I believe there also needs to be consideration of the different types of domestic violence that can occur; it is not only physical but sexual, economic and emotional too.

At the aforementioned forum I attended, people spoke of their personal experiences with family violence. Service providers from the Frankston community and individuals speakers all voiced a common theme: that we must educate and work on the preventative measures.

It is fantastic to see that the focus of the Royal Commission will be on prevention of family violence, and increasing early intervention. I thank the Commission for taking the time to consider the perspective of the electorate of Frankston and look forward to your recommendations on how to better equip Victoria to deal with this issue.