



Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

Issues relating to Terms of Reference

Family Access Network (FAN) is a small not-for-profit community based agency providing services in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. FAN provides a range of services and supports to young people, parenting and pregnant young people and accompanying children. Programs include case managed support whilst in transitional accommodation, Private Rental Brokerage Program, Children's program, homeless dual diagnosis program, the Family Violence Project, Life Skills programs including Young Mums Group and the Eastern Diversity Group and the Volunteer and Mentoring Program.

FAN CEO participated in a Strategic Conversation on Family Violence in April 2011 and queried the presentation of young women and young parenting women 16 – 25 at police, legal and family violence services in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. This led to a literature review being undertaken by FAN which highlighted that there was little evidence of specific responses, projects, data and research relating to young women of family violence including service interventions. FAN have collated data over several years that has further provided statistics that 70% clients that have presented for services at FAN have experienced family violence and this statistic remains current.

The young women and family Violence (YWFV) steering committee was established by Sue Carlile, FAN CEO, following the Strategic Conversation on Family Violence, where it was identified that young women experiencing family violence, often presenting or supported by a homelessness service were under represented in referrals to Police, Legal Centre's and Family Violence Services. The group was formed with the following agencies; Family Access Network (FAN), Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC), Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) and Box Hill Police (Youth Liaison Officer). Since its inception Federal DHS have also joined working group. The committee began to explore gaps in the service system and collated the evidence to support that young women aged 15 -25 with or without accompanying children who were experiencing family violence appeared not to be accessing Family Violence, Legal and Police Services. It was proposed that there was a need to identify responses specific to young women and to find a way to improve young women's access. A working group was established with a representative from each agency to build networks, identify gaps in service delivery and attempt to bridge gaps identified by young women accessing our services.

A working party from each agency is well established and presented a very successful worker forum in late 2013, aimed at strengthening cross sector collaboration in response to the presenting needs of young women experiencing family violence.

The following gaps have been identified through this collaboration and include;

- There is a gap for services offered to women between the ages of 16-17 years. Although EDVOS assess each case by case they are not funded to support women under the age of 18, DHS, in the participants experience are unlikely to pick up clients who are 16 years or over.
- There was a lack of knowledge from participants regarding services for male victims of domestic violence and both male perpetrators
- Where are all the preventative services? How do young women and men access healthy relationship education?

A second forum was held in November 2014 with workers from each of the agencies. The focus of this forum was to try to bridge those gaps. We had invited along DHS child Protection and Men's Behavioural Change programs to join the table. Unfortunately no one from DHS presented and this made it difficult to achieve the results we had hoped for.

Highlights from our forum;

- There is a service gap for young men who are perpetrators. Men's Behavioural Change will not work with any men under 18years (due to risk factors for younger men) which means there is no specialised group work for young men.
- There are no specific services for young men experiencing domestic violence
- Workers again stated they enjoyed the opportunity to learn how each agency worked and would like further education.

The working group is currently working on directions for 2015, focusing on bridging the gap between services and improving education for young women and men on healthy relationships. While the steering committee continue to oversee the directions and focus on research and funding opportunities.