

29<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence



██████████ Vision: Safety, equality and opportunity for all people

██████████ Mission: To promote respectful relationships through services which enhance the safety, autonomy and wellbeing of women and children

██████████ Values:

The organisation works from a feminist perspective, and values:

- Respect,
- Integrity,
- Responsibility,
- Engagement,
- Innovation,
- Diversity,
- Leadership,
- Trust,
- Optimism,
- Creativity,
- Co-operation,
- Acceptance and
- Knowledge through learning

██████████ Profile:



██████████ is committed to working with the women and children who are victims of family violence because in Australia:

- one women is murdered by her partner or ex-partner every week
- one in three women will experience physical violence during their lifetime
- one in five women will experience sexual violence during their lifetime.

The ██████████ Region consistently has:

- Higher rates of family violence than metropolitan regions and
- Higher rates of family violence incidents than the state wide average

works in partnership with many other local and regional service providers to respond to the incidence of family violence and more broadly address gender inequity and challenge rigid gender stereotypes in the community.

is the only, women's only service delivery organisation in the region. It is also the only organisation that has family violence as its core business. It deals with nothing but family violence.

Its undergirding mantra is safety for women and children, and that violence is never an acceptable form of behaviour.

Currently there are paid staff with volunteers. There are 3 program areas:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

There are team leaders for each program including a woman as the Team Leader in the Program.

Services at incl :

- Risk assessment
- Advocacy
- Case management
- Court support ( )
- Referrals to specialist services such as housing
- Support to remain safe at home
- Children's counselling, therapy and group work
- Women's groups

Preamble:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to complete this submission. I write this with the greatest respect and sincerity.

[REDACTED]

I am writing this submission with particular reference to Question Eight, Nine and Ten in the published Issues Paper.

Gaps And Deficiencies in [REDACTED]'s Response to Family Violence:

**Demand Management:**

*Issues:*

Since arriving at [REDACTED] I have listened and observed the utter frustration and despair from all the teams in being unable to respond to the demand for our services. In the past financial year we have responded to more than 30% above our funded allowance in the [REDACTED] Program, 100% above our targets in the [REDACTED] Program and we have increased the number of support periods by 100% than the previous year in the [REDACTED] Program, and we only casemanage and work with those cases deemed most in need – there are many other cases we could take on if we had capacity. This situation is fraught with risk for us, for the women and children who request our services, for our funders and for our community. [REDACTED] teams should not have to carry this dreadful decision making every day, every week, every month, all year.

The thing that I have grappled with is that this work is about life and death...that is the difference and the shockingness of the situation. I am amazed that there are not more deaths and more injury as a result of the appalling situation. I can only honour and truly respect the women that live every day in fear for their lives and their children's lives at the hands of the perpetrator. Most cases we see have not come through the Police L17 process. The two most common remarks I hear from the teams is that we can only give a 'band aid' response and the words 'horrific violence'

*Possible Solutions:*

- Improve the secure, ongoing funding to be able to respond to the demand
- Encourage collaboration and partnerships in many and varied ways, both multi sectoral and multi organisational, so that workers don't have to 'hold' the work on their own
- Build the capacity of staff so that they are better equipped to deal with the shockingness of the situation
- Improve the wages of the sector so that the sector can keep experienced staff and reduce staff turnover





up the phone and talk to another worker from another sector in a professional and respectful manner is sadly lacking.

*Possible Solutions:*

- Adopt service coordination principles throughout the [REDACTED] region much like the Primary Care Partnership approach in the health sector
- Support the region to adopt these service coordination principles using continuous quality improvement projects
- Develop a strong understanding of the regional data relating to family violence so that together and as a region we can respond to what the data is telling us and also to identify the gaps in the system and service delivery
- Develop a 'regional centre' for family violence. [REDACTED]'s Board supports the development and realisation of this vision and realises that [REDACTED] is very well placed to drive this system change. [REDACTED] wants to drive the development of the provision of a 'centre of non-violence, or family strengthening centre, or family peace centre' and that together with other agencies provide a safe, innovative and coordinated 'house of care' or 'one stop shop' where family violence is the core and where innovation and system redesign happens as a matter of course not only for our clients, but for the whole community.

**Aboriginal Program:**

*Issues:*

Family Violence is rife within the Aboriginal community in the [REDACTED] region. Incarceration is common, generations of horrific family violence is common, anecdotally, the women's threshold of tolerance in family violence is much high compared to their 'white' sisters, lateral violence and incidents of violence by children against the mother is becoming an increasing problem. [REDACTED] has a small Aboriginal team where the Team Leader is an Aboriginal woman, and the team has strong positive engagement with the Aboriginal community in the [REDACTED] region. This engagement has taken a long time and has been fraught with difficulty. They have developed a dynamic Reconciliation Action Plan but are continually frustrated at the limitations of what they want to do as opposed to what they can do. Working with the Aboriginal community takes time and this is not a luxury the team enjoys.

*Possible Solutions:*



- Develop and support the 'holistic' approach to family violence in the Aboriginal team through secure ongoing funding
- Continue to develop strong partnerships with the [REDACTED] so that the Aboriginal team can 'walk beside' their clients.
- Continue to build on the positive relationships developing with other agencies such as Victoria Police and the Department of Justice
- Improve cultural awareness and capacity of the organisations that the Aboriginal team work with so that they feel respected in all potential working partnerships

**The Future:***Possible Solutions:*

- As a local dedicated family violence organisation, we must be supported to continue to act locally to develop a strong coordinated approach with all the organisations we engage with so that the women and children we work with are always at the centre of our care
- As a region, be encouraged to work together to pool our resources so that we can deliver our specialist services through dynamic and thriving partnerships, where our clients are always at the centre of our collective partnerships and pooled resource projects
- As a community, find ways to intervene early when responding to family violence, so that the cycle can be broken, violence in relationships is never tolerated and women and children can live safely and without fear.

Thank you for reading this submission and I am very willing to comment further if required.