

Question One

Are there other goals the Royal Commission should consider?

No, the goals are comprehensive.

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.

My experience of DV is sustained verbal, emotional and physical abuse by my ex-wife. The representation of domestic violence as a 'gendered' phenomenon has the effect of marginalising my experience. 100% of my experience was of a woman abusing me. The suggestion that DV overwhelmingly involves men as perpetrators is unhelpful to me, and to all the other men who have experienced DV. "Men may also be affected by it" is what the Royal Commission's brief reads. "May"?

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?

I can think of no recent reform that helped me, or others like me. In fact, the apparent trivialisation of my experience is doubly hurtful.

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.

I have lobbied my local MP to raise awareness, but he is circumspect about being seen to support men as the prevailing *zeitgeist* is that men are perpetrators, not victims. I have never received any help from any organisation, though I have found men and women in the community are much more open to the reality of DV than the media, lobby groups and feminists.

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.

I feel completely excluded from all campaigns. The "White Ribbon" initiative is exclusive and denies my experience. It is hurtful.

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 perception that women are victims (rather than perpetrators) creates the cloak that allows women to continue abuse. When I shared my experiences with friends, some said "What did you do to provoke her?" So the "women-as-victim" meme promoted by some groups (including the briefing notes associated with the Royal Commission) foster deniability for women. "There's no smoke without fire" allows women to blame men. This needs to be challenged.

Question Seven

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

In our culture, a woman slapping a man is used as a comedy device. Sitcoms get a laugh when the woman strikes the man. We need to recognise that violence is not funny, and the dual standard that "men shouldn't hit women BUT it's funny when a woman strikes a man" needs to be challenged.

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.

I had no idea that I could have recourse to support until I finally went to the Family Court to seek an injunction against my (then) wife. By then I had suffered years of abuse.

I am still damaged now, and the assumptions that underpin this Royal Commission show that men's experiences are still being disregarded. I would like more publicity about the first agency to contact (before the police or courts) when the victim needs support. What resources are available? I didn't know then, and I don't know now. Organisations like White Ribbon are hostile to men as victims, and there is no obvious gatekeeper organisation to act as an impartial source of guidance to what resources are available.

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.

If you do not gather data about men who have been abused, then the scale of the issue remains unknown. The risk is that a perception that DV is gendered causes agencies to only look for evidence of women's experiences. This is not just a risk, it is the current situation.

If the agencies involved are not themselves diverse, (for example are run by women who are themselves gender feminists) there is a risk of confirmation bias. Agencies discount information which does not conform to their pre-conceived ideas.

Question Ten

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

There are too many non-governmental lobby groups spinning information and not enough objective and independent gatekeepers to impartial support services. What does White Ribbon actually do? Deny my experience? What else?

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?

As a male victim of DV I feel completely excluded from any support. In fact, I feel that my experience is denied, including by the language of this Royal Commission. The obvious improvement is to adopt a gender-neutral approach to support for victims and to marginalise lobby groups with an agenda that is misaligned to the needs of the community.

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?

I ran away from my abusive partner. I had begged her to stop on more occasions than I could count. She didn't change because I didn't know there were any programs for abusive women, effective or not. She would not have gone anyway as she preferred to hide her violence behind closed doors.

Question Thirteen

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 cause of her violence and other forms of abuse was her inability to control her temper. Anger. Rage. The solution might have been anger management classes. But she regarded coercive control as her 'right'. This is reinforced by cultural stereotypes promulgated by women "Happy wife; happy life".

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?

Women are routinely portrayed in the media and by governmental and non-governmental bodies discussing DV as victims not perpetrators. Current processes support continued abuse by women as they reinforce the view that their violence is not their fault. It's the man's fault. The stereotype needs to be changed.

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.

This question does not apply to me. But I think that the "One in Three" campaign should be given more publicity, and groups who deny male experience as victims of DV should be censured.

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?

This question does not apply to me. But I find the idea that demonising boys and young men in school as potential abusers is reprehensible. The "He for She" campaign is evidence of bias in stereotyping women as victims and men as perpetrators.

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?

When I went to the Family Court to seek an injunction I was alone. But my abusive wife had a supporter. I was shocked. She was in the wrong (and did not deny her behaviour) but she had support. I was alone. I don't think this implies that her supporter condoned her abuse, but it never occurred to me to invite a supporter. Why?

Because I felt guilty that I was publicising the (private) behaviour of the woman I had loved. The change I would like is to publicise that men can report abuse without feeling that they are being "disloyal" to their partner.

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?

Ignorance. Where is the support for men? Why do so many websites categorise men as perpetrators rather than victims? Why is this sector dominated by gender ideologues who have extreme views? Why is my experience being airbrushed from history? The bruises have healed; the memories linger on.

Question Nineteen

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

We need to stop three common beliefs:

1. that women are exclusively victims of DV
2. that violence against men is funny, and
3. that if a woman is found to have committed DV against a man, that he must have done something to provoke her.

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?

The third sector of non-governmental bodies is dominated by sectarian interests which are misaligned to the needs of the community. There needs to be governmental leadership to ensure a needs-driven response to DV, not an agenda-driven response.

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.

In the short term investment is needed into improving men's emotional, mental and physical welfare. Why are so many men living on the street? Luke Batty's father Greg Anderson was living in a car and had a long history of mental illness. Demonising him for being male might fit a

misandristic agenda, but the reality is he fell between the cracks of the judicial and health systems. How many other men need help not prison?

In the medium term research is needed into the scale and nature of men's experience of DV as victims. Why is diversity celebrated as being a good thing for boards and decision making in general, but the agenda for DV is set by such a narrow demographic? How can we avoid confirmation bias distorting research and creating self-fulfilling results?

In the longer term we need to address the empathy gap faced by men. As I write this a woman in Victoria has attempted to shame a man who took a 'selfie' suggesting that the man is a paedophile on the basis of no evidence other than her ignorance. Why do *some* women hate men so much that they are willing to demonise men on the basis of a suspicion? Why do so many people lack empathy for the experiences of men? These are the unheard voices that need to be considered. I would like to see TV shows that include scenes of violence –including scenes of women slapping men- shown after 9PM.

How can we create an equal society if people believe violence against men is funny?