

JR:JMN

28 May 2015

Royal Commission into Family Violence
PO Box 535
FLINDERS LANE VIC 8009

Dear Sir / Madam

Re: Royal Commission into Family Violence

The Shire of Campaspe supports the inquiry into Family Violence within Victoria. The Campaspe community, like other rural and regional communities across Victoria, is impacted by family violence.

Council has a number of partners in the region who share similar concerns including Campaspe Primary Care Partnership and Victoria Police.

Figures contained in recent Victoria Police crime statistics indicate the high level of cases of family violence within the Shire of Campaspe. There are also fears of intergenerational impact as a result of continued exposure of our community to such crimes if this matter is not addressed.

As a specific example of issues faced by Council, recent experiences have highlighted that victims and their families attending the Echuca Magistrates Court have no waiting area separate to that of the general public and the accused. This has resulted in displays of violence in front of other members of the public.

Providing a space for the victim and their family during this difficult time would be a significant improvement and should be considered at all rural and regional court facilities not only the Echuca Magistrates Court. This would be a relatively simple solution that could alleviate current issues faced by members of our community.

Council experiences issues as Echuca Moama is a major tourist destination with more than 689,000 domestic visitors for the year ending September 2014. Echuca Moama provides numerous structured attractions and events throughout the year. In addition to these structured events, Echuca Moama is a popular end of season football, netball, rugby team trip location. Rates of crime and violence have been seen to increase during peak tourist seasons.

Alcohol misuse has long been linked with domestic violence. More recently use of methamphetamines, in particular 'ice' is believed to play a significant role in family violence resulting in physical assault and harm.

Council believes the most comprehensive intervention is to seek to prevent family violence before it occurs through a range of whole-of-community interventions which build community capacity and mutually respectful attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. Council submits the key in preventing family violence lies in breaking the cycle that



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reinforces unacceptable behaviours as the norm.

Consequently, the response to address family violence within Victoria needs to occur at two levels. Firstly to ensure that people who are experiencing family violence have adequate local services and supports to assist them. Secondly to work towards preventing family violence by addressing the cultural and social factors that are contributing.

Council submits that a number of initiatives would aid in addressing family violence such as:

- Additional funding to coordinate the provision of local outreach services,
- Support in the form of temporary and emergency accommodation for victims of family violence,
- Provision of a local women's refuge and a crisis centre,
- Appropriately resourced and coordinated approach to form a response to the escalating 'ice' epidemic across Victoria,
- Availability of resources to local government to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the issues related to family violence and the opportunities to address them.

We believe that having a long term focus on the prevention of family violence is the only way to change community behaviours and attitudes.

In the short term greater support for the victims and the families of victims of family violence is required, such as provision of appropriate spaces at court facilities and more coordinated support services.

In conclusion, Council is concerned about the rates of family violence, stereotyped gender beliefs and the long term damage being done to our community. We trust that this submission will aid the Royal Commission with its considerations and would welcome an opportunity to expand upon any matter herein.

Yours faithfully


JASON RUSSELL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER