



Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria)

Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee Submission

29 May 2015

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Introduction

Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee (GIFVC) was formed in 2006, along with other similar regional committees across Victoria. It covers 11 Local Government Areas in Western Victoria, largely along the western corridor stretching from Bacchus Marsh, the major regional urban centre of Ballarat and the surrounding Hepburn and Golden Plains Shires, through Ararat, Stawell, and the Wimmera sub-region with its main urban base of Horsham and surrounding townships, settlements and rural hinterlands, such as Nhill, Edenhope, St Arnaud, and Jeparit.

In July 2015, in order to align with DHHS Area administrative boundaries established in 2012, Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee intends to split, with the eastern part becoming the Central Highlands Family Violence Committee, and the western part joining the newly forming Western District Integrated Family Violence Committee. Arrangements for these changes are currently underway. For simplicity this submission will refer to Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee (GIFVC).

The 2006 “Reform Guiding Principles” were further focussed under the *A Right to Safety and Justice: Strategic Framework to Guide Continuing Family Violence Reform in Victoria 2010-2020*. These strategies established the practice and expectation that agencies in GIFVC involved in the family violence service system would work together. This objective - of an integrated approach to family violence - has been largely achieved. Collaborative working is now considered normal in the Grampians Region.

Review 2015

In order to maximise the effectiveness of this collaborative practice, GIFVC initiated a review in late 2014, with a final report and recommendations issued in February 2015.

This is seen by the committee as part of a developmental trajectory that has moved the committee beyond service integration and into a new era characterised by maximising shared collective impact across the region to assist women, children and families to live free from family violence, and to hold perpetrators of family violence accountable.

To this end, the GIFVC has adapted the Collective Impact Model as its guiding model. Through this model, the Committee has established the following common agenda:

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GIFVC Common Agenda

Grampians Family Violence Committee will provide specialist expertise and leadership of the family violence service system. It will do this by:

- Identifying priority issues and opportunities and responding accordingly
- Driving practice change and innovation
- Influencing positive change in attitudes

This common agenda will be pursued and supported through more purposeful collection of data and information, constant communication between stakeholders, agencies and into communities, focussed action plans that emphasise mutually reinforcing activities, and the re-design of necessary backbone support to ensure leadership and action is ongoing.

The recommendations and structures that GIFVC is currently adopting through the review and implementation of a Collective Impact Model will position it more effectively in the current and future environment. This submission largely leaves these internal capability and effectiveness mechanisms to the side, as these are matters for GIFVC to resolve internally within its current resource allocation. Instead, this submission focuses on a handful of external, system-wide ideas that would enhance the ability of GIFVC to perform a system-level leadership role.

System-level leadership

System-level leadership in our view encompasses a number of elements:

- *Awareness*: without effective information, data and understanding of trends there is no way of knowing whether, how and where to make system-level changes that are cost effective, sustainable, and responsive to the need to keep women and children safe, and perpetrators of family violence held accountable for their violence
- *Communication, networks and influence*: By their nature integrated and collaborative networks have 'influence' rather than 'authority' over their constituent parts. To affect change a combination of formal and informal partnerships, backed up by useful, value-adding contributions is required.
- *Platforms for action*: To make meaningful change there needs to be opportunities to act on information and mobilise networks that are also cost effective and sustainable for the duration of their need.

Outlined below are a number of recommendations that would better enable GIFVC to fulfil its system-level leadership role.

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System-level suggestions

Awareness

- One of the key leadership roles that GIFVC will play is the ability to generate, collect and communicate effective data and information to enhance informed consensus decision-making and influence. The Regional Integration Coordinator resource is crucial to developing, maintaining and communicating such information, and GIFVC will continue to develop its practices and structures to maximise the effectiveness of this resource.

At present however this 'awareness' role is hindered by inconsistent systems of information gathering and reporting and unreliability of non-dedicated funding streams or whole of government indexing of measurable costs for outcomes. There is plenty of 'data' in the system: funded agencies, non-funded agencies, Victoria Police, and the Court system all gather, collect and to varying degrees communicate data and information about family violence. However there is no common system of data collection. This limits GIFVC's ability to understand and act upon priority issues and trends as they arise.

For instance, all agencies have reported growing demand following recent increase in profile of family violence as a community-wide issue. However there is currently no way of effectively monitoring the system-wide impact of these increases. The current service system makes it hard to adequately shift service resources while meeting increasing demand. Over loaded crisis responses place women and children at higher risk.

Moreover, data is usually gathered and reported in relation to service outputs, rather than community outcomes, which under an indexing system would be measurable and sustainable. The current system means that the results and impacts of interventions are limited in their relevance, and at times limited to only one organisation. The committee's ability to understand and address early intervention is hindered by the unavailability of collective data.

GIFVC is commencing a region-wide mapping exercise to identify geographic and community cohorts of highest priority, and establish baseline understanding of current service requirements. Under current arrangements the investment of time and effort required in this exercise would need to be repeated regularly in order to stay relevant and up-to-date. System-level, outcome-focussed information would lead to better joint decision-making and would avoid having to replicate comprehensive mapping exercises.

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The Committee has read with interest proposals around the development of a Family Violence Index in Victoria. We welcome this development and look forward to assisting with its development and implementation locally.

○ *Recommendations*

- *Dedicated sustainable investment is required in system-level real-time information gathering and sharing practices.*
- *Statewide Indexing should be introduced to measure outcomes and service system suitability (similar to Vic Health funding)*
- *Strengthen outcome-based funding and reporting, as recommended in the 'Service Sector Reform' Final Report (recommendation 10, p.49), and 'A Right to Safety and Justice' (Action 6, p.42-3)*

Communication, networks and influence

- At present, no single body has the *scope, authority* and *permission* to lead family violence services regionally. It is GIFVC's view – reinforced during the Review - that it has the key role to play to provide a focal point for issues relating to family violence in the Region and Area. However, as long as the role of Integrated Family Violence Committees is seen to be about service integration and resource coordination then there is a limited scope for initiating action more broadly outside family violence services. Primary Care Partnerships in the health sector – which are supported by executive and administrative resources - provide a useful comparison for the provision of system-level leadership.
 - Regional Integration Coordinators (RICs) are employed to link the elements of the GIFVC together. While the recent GIFVC review identified the need for RICs to provide strategic leadership, at present their capacity to lead is hampered by limited scope and resource. Their role needs to include significant leadership as well as supported, dedicated administrative functions. Strengthened system-level resourcing would enable this to occur.
- *Recommendations*
- *Expand and clarify role of Area IFVCs to enhance further local family violence system leadership*
 - *Expand and resource role of Regional Integration Coordinators to include and enhance significant system-level leadership*

Platforms for action: innovation, collaboration and flexibility

- At present there are limited opportunities to try new approaches. With GIFVC leading the development of system-wide awareness, and distributing this information through formal and informal networks of

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influence, opportunities for further innovation and collaboration need to be made available so that agencies have further incentives to work together on activities of shared value.

Dedicated innovation funding, enabling the GIFVC to lead design of new service models and practices relevant to its area and geographical population – not attached to service outputs but enabling designed solutions to identified problems – would provide live opportunities for testing and demonstrating new and collaborative approaches. These would be flexible packages with broad criteria and immediate, ongoing monitoring and feedback to enhance wider practice change quickly.

For instance, the design of joint intake systems would help address issues relating to inconsistent referral and service allocation practices. Innovation programs could help accelerate the effective uptake of digital technologies to assist those affected by family violence. Co-location and Shared Care Planning models between family services, family violence services, alcohol and other drugs services, and / or disability services would help improve alignment of entry and casework practices, offering further enhanced and streamlined referral pathways for women and children appropriate to the levels of violence being perpetrated against them.

- Present funding models can act as a disincentive to collective action. Similar to the point made in the ‘Awareness’ section above, output funding has inhibited the ability of individual agencies to progress collective outcomes. Competitive funding too has a number of drawbacks: it is a disincentive for collaboration and makes for uncertainty, leading to poor staff retention and loss of specialist staff. Also ‘cohort’ funding – which limits service responses to particular community cohorts – can also inhibit flexible and collaborative responses.

As the 2013 ‘Service Sector Reform’ Report recommends, the social services system should ‘focus on results and funding for outcomes’ (Recommendation 10, p.49).

○ *Recommendations:*

- *Allocate funding to innovation and service reform activities that can be accessed by agencies working collaboratively to pursue dedicated, indexed sustainable whole of government system-level goals (see Attachment 1, Section 3 below for some preliminary ideas submitted by GIFVC membership during the writing of this submission)*
- *Strengthen outcome-based funding and reporting, as recommended in the ‘Service Sector Reform’ Final Report (recommendation 10, p.49) , and ‘A Right to Safety and Justice’ (Action 6, p.42-3)*

Conclusion

This submission outlines the key high-level ideas that would improve system-wide capacity to improve awareness, strengthen networks, and deliver innovation and system improvement. Table 1 below collates our recommendations together into short-term, medium-term and long-term timeframes.

Numerous other ideas have been included in Attachment 1 that have been identified through the development of this submission. These provide a catalogue of service level information that will also inform the Royal Commission.

Table 1: Summary of recommendations

The Royal Commission can strengthen the capacity for system-level leadership by:		
Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Further clarify the role of IFVCs to include regional family violence system-level leadership •Expanding and further resourcing role of Regional Integration Coordinators to include and enhance significant system-level leadership •Develop a range of response options aimed at increasing accountability and education. For instance, greater capacity for Responses to Men and couple work where partners want to stay in a relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sustainable investment in system-level real-time information gathering and sharing practices •Introduce Statewide Indexing to measure outcomes and service system suitability (similar to Vic Health funding) •Allocate funding to innovation and service reform activities that can be accessed by agencies working collaboratively to pursue dedicated, indexed sustainable whole of government system-level goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthen outcome-based funding and reporting, as recommended in the 'Service Sector Reform' Final Report (recommendation 10, p.49) , and 'A Right to Safety and Justice" (Action 6, p.42-3) •Ongoing resources and policy commitment to prevention work •Increased collaboration between government departments

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Attachment One:

Service level Information to inform Submission

The Family Violence Royal Commission 'Issues Paper' provided a number of prompts to inform submissions. This Attachment provides a summary of responses from Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee (GIFVC) members in response to those prompts that have informed the main body of the GIFVC submission above.

These ideas and insights are divided into three broad sections:

1. Recent reforms, including strengths and challenges
2. Gaps and deficiencies in the current system
3. Opportunities and ideas for improvement

These are provided to the Royal Commission by way of highlighting more specific service level ideas and insights to supplement system-level suggestions contained in the GIFVC Submission.

1. Recent Reforms

1a. Strengths associated with recent reforms

- The increasing recognition of the **gendered nature of family violence** has improved significantly, although it is acknowledged that this could improve further.
- Increasing awareness and recognition that family violence is not only a welfare and service response issue, nor just a community sector issue, but is actually a **whole of community issue**.
- The relative **effectiveness of the Family Violence Protection Act** and its implementation by Victoria Police has been a standout success of recent Family Violence reforms. Not only has it resulted in increased **community awareness**, but the **greater powers for police to make safety orders** is a positive change, removing the responsibility away from women to instigate intervention orders. It has been suggested that **this power should be extended** to include more serious responses to breaches of intervention orders.
- The **increased involvement of Victoria Police and Protection Services**, particularly around enhanced communication and prevention measures, has been a major improvement locally.
- The **introduction of L17 referrals** has been a significant factor in improving responses to family violence, particularly for engaging women in rural and remote areas.
- The **Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP)** in rural areas has helped with responding to family violence, and has reduced recidivism.

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- Increased opportunities for **family violence counselling to link with existing ways in which women and children are already engaged**, such as through child care centres, has been a good improvement.
- Increasing emphasis on **primary prevention** as part of a holistic response to family violence has been a positive, and is crucial to preventing family violence
- Establishment of the **national body OurWatch** has been a promising move, and any moves to further consolidate this resource would be welcomed.

1b. Challenges associated with recent reforms

- Considering the successful increase in awareness and response to family violence, there has **not been a proportional increase in resources to meet increasing demand**. For instance:
 - the national 1800 support number can have waiting times of up to one hour and more;
 - the Men's Behaviour Change Program is unable to keep up with demand,
 - there is a lack of access to services after hours. Police stations for instance are often unattended, and it is either very difficult or impossible to get in touch with places of refuge
 - access to legal services is increasingly difficult
 - access to housing and housing services is increasingly difficult

Most of these demand issues are particularly difficult in rural areas.

- While this increasing demand has had a limited benefit in increasing collaboration and innovation, as highlighted in the main submission above, this has occurred in an ad hoc manner, rather than at a system level.
- **Reform in Justice and Legal Systems has been limited**. There is still a large focus on managing demand, and there appears to be a need for magistrates to be more consistent in their understanding of family violence.
- While reforms have been aimed at streamlining and consolidating the family violence system, **over time duplication has crept back in**, emphasising the need for enhanced capacity for system-level leadership as indicated in the main report.

2. Gaps and deficiencies in the current system

- **Housing provision** is a major factor in providing effective responses to family violence. This is the key need for many vulnerable women and families. While this is largely due to market and infrastructure factors not directly in control of any single system, there are some improvements that could be made. For instance,
 - Attaching and / or aligning public and community housing services more closely to family violence services would increase the ability of family

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- violence services to influence housing allocation practices. This would be particularly important in rural areas.
 - More flexible supported accommodation options need to be available for women and children, rather than often rigid and limited options
 - Enhance strategic and operational links with private sector providers, such as Real Estate Agents and the online accommodation booking service, Air bnb
 - Brokerage funding for rent assistance and commencing rentals
- Currently there is at times **too much emphasis on responding to family violence incidents**, rather than a focus on the ongoing impact and nature of family violence relating to power and control of perpetrators. Any new service model design should take into account different and flexible ways of engaging with people at different points in their experience of family violence.
- **Lack of telephone interpreters** for those who speak languages other than English. Nationally funded programs assist greatly in meeting these costs but they are regularly unable to meet the full need. For rural areas this service is invaluable.
- Sometimes **concerns around a perpetrator's confidentiality appear to be preferred over risk to their family**. While privacy matters are very important and should be respected and maintained, a common cross-sector understanding of safety should be the paramount factor.
- There is increased reporting of **older children living in violent homes who are also perpetrating violence themselves**. There are limited programs in place to address this.
- The change to Family Violence focussed legislation has resulted in an increase of reports and referrals that are **interfamilial**. These referrals require different service responses and pathways to the historic Women's Services and Men's Service pathways. They include a range of Adult / Adult, Adult / Child dynamics that are currently not funded as a Family Violence response in the service system.

3. Opportunities and ideas for improvement

In the course of collecting input in to this submission, a number of specific ideas have been raised. Many of these would fall under the scope of the innovation and collaboration program recommended in the main body of the report.

These are not projects that are necessarily endorsed by GIFVC, but provide examples of the kind of initiatives that practitioners in the region have identified as potential opportunities.

- Early intervention programs, particularly with young women
- Ability to implement long-term case management

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- Family violence support groups, for instance women's self-defence training
- Family violence counselling for women and children
- Housing attached to specific family violence programs, such as the 'A place to call home' initiative
- Response to men similar to MBCP, including individual case management or counselling
- Court workers for family violence clients
- Statewide rollout of SafeTCard
- Forums, awareness events, and group work have been particularly effective in many areas. They have been identified as the 'turning point' for many participants
- Increased co-location of service models, where family violence agencies work alongside other agencies to enhance spontaneous and systemic connections. Areas where this model might be particularly useful include housing, courts, Centrelink, Community Health, homelessness support agencies, alcohol and other drug services, disability services, hospitals, schools.
- Docket system in magistrates court so that perpetrators face the same magistrate each time.
- Men's Education and Accountability program that reports and assesses after sessions to corrections, courts and prisons, with men who do not participate issued with breach orders. This is similar to a model currently running in the Gold Coast
- Replace No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) with a grant system
- Resourcing allocated to working with L17 process, which has a very effective improvement in the system as highlighted above.
- Change leadership programs at local level, working with local government and businesses. Act@Work program is a recent positive example.
- Improve education programs at all levels, from school through to tertiary levels
- Training for GPs in identifying and responding to family violence, including streamlined referral processes
- Higher education training for family violence workers needs to be developed, nationally. Also accredit family violence worker with Certificate IV Training and Assessment so they can further spread their learning across other service providers and sectors