

28/05/15

Dear 'Royal Commission into Family Violence'

I am writing because I wish to submit my opinion in regards to recommendations and future directions to decrease family violence. As a psychology research professional I believe that this is a complex area, however the state of the current system fails to support victims of family violence. The lenient sentencing and lack of serious consideration given to AVO's contributes to this. Harsher penalties to perpetrators of domestic violence may serve as a deterrent. In the current conditions, I believe offenders feel as if they can violate and abuse women and children, with little consequences.

I am sickened by recent news stories such as that of Rekihah O'Donnell, who was shot by her partner and was charged with manslaughter. Her killer had a long standing history of domestic violence and Rekihah's death potentially could have been prevented if his previous history was taken seriously by the justice system. A charge of manslaughter means this man will be released and again the next women he meets will be in danger. In his case the fact that he may have been under the influence of the drug Ice is irrelevant given the history of his offending.

Drug problems, particularly Ice, seem to have exacerbated the problem of violence more generally within our society. Drug use should not be used as an excuse for offending and if anything, proves a person is more culpable and worthy of imprisonment. This is an area that needs to be considered for law reforms.

Perhaps a bit of research should be performed and consulted in order to inform laws on offenders who demonstrate violence against women or children, and their potential for rehabilitation/risk of re-offending. AVO's and threats to kill need to be taken more seriously. Further to this, increasing mental health support for families may assist them to seek help where necessary.

Regards,
Amy Brown