

**Response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's Call for Submissions:  
Monitoring the Family Violence Reforms – July 2020**

**Submission #002 – Individual practitioner – Corrections Victoria**

**Q1. What are the major changes you have seen in the family violence service system since the Royal Commission into Family Violence made its final report and recommendations in 2016?**

Our organisation has implemented better processes for identifying family violence. We have started to look at programs to educate and create safety planning but the demand is so high and our resources are limited.

**Q2. How has the experience of accessing services and support changed since the Royal Commission for victim survivors, including children, and perpetrators of family violence?**

I work mostly with victims and some perpetrators. There has been an increase in demand for support but services are overwhelmed at the Women's Prison. Whilst referrals are being made often women are waitlisted and given the waitlists are so long they are released before trauma counselling and other services can engage. There is also a lack of through care and women go back into family violence feeling unsupported and unheard.

**Q3. What are the most critical changes to the family violence service system that still need to occur?**

There is a lack of safe housing. Women and children are often put in motels which are insufficient and women feel overwhelmed. There should be hubs where all of their needs can be met e.g Centrelink, housing, financial counselling, family law advice, trauma counselling, support groups, education, material aid. There should be 24/7 safety hubs that women can attend with their children in a crisis.

**Q4. Are there any parts of the family violence reforms that have not yet progressed enough and require more attention?**

I VO violations need to be addressed with harsher penalties and perpetrators made to attend education sessions, wear bracelets (serious violent offenders) etc

**Q5. Are there any improvements that could be made to the implementation approach of the family violence reforms?**

The women I work with are assessed and plans put into place only to find in the community there isn't enough wrap around to support them through the process. Services are fragmented and overwhelmed. Intensive case workers are needed more often to help drive the changes the women are going through. Victims are often broken and traumatised and the system is complicated to navigate. They often give up and go back to the family violence.

**Q6. What has been the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your organisation or sector? How have the services that your organisation or sector provides had to change?**

Our service providers are gone. We have no education programs, no family violence case workers that attend the site and reduced capacity via phone, almost impossible intake for refugees and none of our women can access Safe Steps etc until they are actually released as we have to wait until they are in the community and at risk. Our cohort often experience high risk and extreme violence. They are reluctant to go to authorities as they have criminal histories and are often not believed or treated poorly.

**Q7. Has the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted any strengths or weaknesses in the family violence service system?**

Often our women have complex issues dealing with the aftermath of family violence-trauma, removal of children, financial distress. There are even less services available than before.

**Q8. Are there any changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic that you think should be continued?**

Using video links can be useful.

**Q9. The Monitor invites you to make any final general comments around the family violence service system reform.**

No answer