

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

Submission #009 – Individual practitioner – Castlemaine Secondary College

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?

1. The sharing of service provision through the new model proposed by the Orange Door. The Orange Door has opened up a more eclectic response for victims which is soon to be rolled out in Bendigo in second half of 2020. Bring it on.
2. More immediate police response which manages FV there and then when it is reported. There are immediate actions taken to keep people safe at the time of an incident.
3. More workers across the board, but it is sad to say that ore needed.
4. The RC into FV has brought FV out of the cupboard as it occurs in all homes or

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?

As a small country town we still experience a lack of presence of FV support in our town. There is no visiting FV specialist in Castlemaine and women are asked to travel to Bendigo to access supports or offered a phone call. We need a presence in our town once a week on a regular basis. Castlemaine Secondary College proposes that the secondary school be a venue for this service for carers and for young people. Schools are a safe place and can be accessed easily, it would not be seen as suspicious by any perpetrator.

This would support local secondary services currently working with families experiencing FV. CNV is our FV provider, there is no presence in our town.

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

Children and young people lack service delivery. Their need for safety is still not adequately considered in the Family Law System.

Secondary schools are well placed to have a regular service on a weekly basis. This service can be educational, supportive and offer secondary consultation to wellbeing staff at the interface in the school system.

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

Putting kids safety first is one that has not progressed enough through the FV reforms. Children and young people remain at risk of harm in many situations as the FLC orders supervised contact which continues to traumatise children by seeing the perpetrator.

Supervision provides safety but it does not stop the recurrence of trauma for young people.. No child/young person should continue to be at risk of harm through systemic trauma in our community. I agree that this is a complex issue as fathers have a right to see their child but as a mental health practitioners in a public school we advocate for perpetrators to have completed therapeutic group programs and or individual therapy with remorse having been demonstrated before they can have contact with their children.

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

Yes, there needs to be a FV specialist worker in the secondary school system one day per week to support students who live with violence. Putting kids safety first is paramount and a school is a safe place for students and carers who are experiencing FV.

Educational programs could be built into curriculum and the FV sector can be at the forefront of this change in delivering these programs with existing Wellbeing staff and educators who work within the Secondary school system.

There also needs to be more programs on offer for perpetrators of violence so that they can commence their education and reprogramming through Cognitive Behaviour Programs such as Men's Behaviour Program and other intensive individual therapeutic counselling.

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?

FV sector not providing face to face.

As a school we have supported vulnerable children during Covid-19 as per DEET guidelines.

Schools aren't given extra supports to provide the face to face support as an essential service.

FV sector is not linked to schools.

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

It has highlighted the weaknesses in the system.

That is that the FV sector is risk adverse. Essential services such as schools provide support through children attending school. Where has the support from the FV sector been?

We need to have a FV worker within the secondary school system one day a week.

It would be like a community police officer's presence in the Northern Territory school system. This role covers a few schools and has a presence. This role was developed in the 1990's to address the rising incidence of crime amongst young people in the Northern Territory.

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

Not aware of any.

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

Please listen to what the community sector is relaying to the inquiry into the FV service system.