

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

Submission #019 – Individual – Cardijn Community of Australia

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?

In regard to the way female victims are treated by police there has been a general improvement with retraining and specialists squads although local station officers haven't been sympathetic and given inappropriate advice like removing themselves and children from residence when they do not have the financial means or family/ friends network to do so. The court response is much improved in procedure although physical arrangements in some courts need to be improved for safety from partner.

Male victims of domestic violence from partner due to ongoing psychological violence and ability to obtain orders without proof or by perjury is an issue which courts, police and legal staff given little credence to although widely acknowledged by welfare authorities as a key factor in increasing rates of male depression and suicide

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?

For women the access to a variety of support agencies is much improved along with the promotion of their existence by formal advertising and word of mouth through various church and social networks. The remaining issue is the strong hierarchy in some groups that limits women complaining, the multiplicity of languages and arranged marriages where women not encouraged/ banned to move outside home.

For male victims the number of agencies is limited, there is culture not to report violence, an unawareness of new laws of family violence and an orientation in some agencies not to believe or accept victims narrative and raising judgmental opinions that justify female's violence. The attitude in Magistrates Court trivializes complaint by documentation process to precis complaint, the huge case load, the time limit and the attitude of some magistrates to dismiss psychological abuse by adopting male attitude to "suck it up and get on with life, because you are a man"

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

That family violence complaints are handled or reviewed by senior officer because the victim does not always explain their issues coherently or clearly. The response should be prompt and not make a complainant wait for over an hour in some cases in the waiting room.

The refurbishment of magistrates courts needs to take the protection of victims into account. That a specialized court system be established to handle family violence cases. That the Chief Magistrate be given a similar power to the Coroner to review the underlying causes of violence in cases to report back to parliament on broader policy and actions to be taken to prevent violence taking place.

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

In one case , a male partner was falsely accused several times of breaching an intervention order and the police had no option but to arrest him . This action was being taken by the partner who was seeking for him to have no access to his children. As he lived alone it was not possible for him to establish he had not breached the order. While the actions of police are understandable , there needs to be some procedure to avoid the perjured use of this tactic which cause mental trauma , work disruption and a slur on their applications for shared custody. We found this to a common issue in single father's groups from Springvale to Frankston region .

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

Education programs about violence that recognized 30% of victims are male because present promotion assumes women are always the victims.

A greater emphasis on all the elements in new law that constitute family violence which are not widely know like psychological, financial and restriction on liberties in a democratic society which is distinct from some religious and cultural backgrounds some people come from .

An emphasis on family and friend networks to step forward rather than stand back. The introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse changed the hands off culture after Daniel Valerio

An orientation program for media presenters who dont take violence seriously and see the direct correlation with rising rates of male suicide ; to alter the picture of aggressor as a mindless , violent person to someone who needs help. Rosie Batty made this plea for men like her husband but it has been overlooked . We have found a number of offenders like police and veterans to be in or just left high stress jobs where there is little debriefing of the traumas they experience which evolves into violence against partners and children . The traditional group who have evolved out of Roman legal model where a woman is a legal chattel has been re - enforced by media where they are frequently bashed in film , television and electronic games where people become desensitized and normalized as acceptable behavior when you are stressed.

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?

As police figures indicate the incidence has gone up dramatically because families have been used to going in separate directions without shared meals , personal work spaces and getting out of the house to relieve pressure valve . The job keeper and seeker payments provided some survival funds but long term concerns that job would disappear or long periods of work inactivity has built pressure although this was compensated by lack of arduous travel times to work. Given the lack of agricultural workers to harvest crops because backpackers not here , it would provide ideal change of pace and change of space for the over stressed group to re- appraise their attitudes and behaviours and for the " Roman" group to gain a new perspective of working closely with a wide range of people as farm programs for veterans and troubled youth have shown.

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

People get married / partner , set up house but have no long term plan of living together or servicing their emotional relationship . This extends to children who they physically provide for and pay for but there is little clear idea of how to live cohesively on a daily basis.

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

It should extend the national cabinet approach to positive importance of family as basic building block in our society which smaller states like WA , SA , Queensland and Tasmania have paid attention to through their "villages" approach and services working together rather than separate policy silos with their partners in community

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

The main concerns of our enquiry has been the invisibility of violence towards men , the silo policy approach to deal with outcomes rather than the root causes and a prioritization of family life in our economic and social environment where we pay lip service but have taken no substantive action since we adopted a two working parent policy in 1964 .