



Submission to the Victorian Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

July 2020

For more information, please contact:

Major Paul Hateley

Head of Government Relations

The Salvation Army Australia

Address: 2-4 Brisbane Avenue, Barton ACT 2600

Mobile: 0413 830 201

Email: government.relations@salvationarmy.org.au

Table of Contents

Statement of Recognition 1

Executive Summary 2

Introduction 3

Impact of COVID-19..... 4

Service system reform – current state, experience and access to support 6

 Orange Door 7

 Working with police 8

 Social housing 9

 Workforce 9

Service system reform – what is still required11

 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.....11

 Women on temporary visas11

 Women and girls in forced marriages.....12

 Women with pets13

 Women with disability14

 LGBTQI14

 Young people and adolescents.....15

 Single women15

 Families at high risk15

 Legal support for victim-survivors.....17

 Perpetrator intervention programs.....17

Conclusion 19

About The Salvation Army20

Statement of Recognition

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, acknowledging their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.



Executive Summary

The Salvation Army is located and embedded in many communities, providing significant emergency relief, homelessness and family violence services and community support through Salvos Stores and community-based activities.

By virtue of what we do, we experience first-hand the widespread detrimental health and wellbeing effects of family, domestic and sexual violence across all demographics, ages, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic backgrounds within Australia.

Continued investment and prioritisation of prevention, early intervention, advocacy campaigns, media and reporting and bystander interventions by the Victorian Government is critical to influence community attitudes and change underlying societal drivers of family violence.

Continued commitment to ensure that responses are aligned, informed and safe through the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (**FVISS**) and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (**MARAM**) is critical to ongoing future reform.

The Salvation Army is particularly concerned about those experiencing violence or for whom home is not a safe place, and those who have no place to call home. We urgently call on the Victorian Government to provide increased and ongoing funding support for family violence services, perpetrator intervention programs and research, and to ensure adequate social and affordable housing for people leaving violence or experiencing homelessness due to family violence.

In the medium term, careful consideration must be had in relation to continued implementation of the Victorian Support and Safety Hub model (**the Orange Door**), to ensure funding and resources match demand and there is a collective understanding of the model across all specialist family violence, perpetrator and family services.

Our experience, identifies that children and adolescents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, those on temporary visas or in forced marriages, women with disability, women with pets, single women and families at high risk also deserve greater attention. The family violence workforce also requires additional support to manage increased demand and complexity of cases. Technological barriers, the difficulty of managing vicarious trauma when a worker is working from home and issues around supply of appropriate housing to ensure timely throughput are additional stressors to the personal impact of the pandemic on the workforce.

Introduction

The Salvation Army thanks the Victorian Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor for the opportunity to provide a submission on how the family violence service system, and users' experience of it, has changed since the Royal Commission, what is still required to improve support to both the victim-survivor and the perpetrator, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family violence remains the primary factor in women and their children seeking The Salvation Army homelessness services. During 2018-19 more than 150 The Salvation Army staff assisted some 9,204 women including 3,739 children experiencing family violence across Australia. From 2 December 2019 to 10 January 2020, The Salvation Army homelessness research project surveyed 292 respondents and identified 49 per cent of single parent respondents were homeless due to family and/or domestic violence; and 23 per cent of all respondents identified family and/or domestic violence as contributing reason.¹

The Salvation Army offers a range of specialist family violence services including outreach, crisis interventions, brokerage and emergency accommodation, transitional housing, and housing support and provides family violence prevention programs to over 1,000 men nationally. Our specialist family violence services also partner with services such as the Victorian police, Integrated Family Services, financial counsellors and courts to offer individualised support to women and their children, addressing risk and safety while planning for recovery.

This review process represents an opportunity to examine and evaluate how the Victorian Government is responding to the gendered nature of family violence, ensuring that perpetrators remain accountable for their actions, everyone is safe and free from harm and the victim-survivors of family violence are supported to recover.

¹ Lensun, L., and Russell, C. (2020). Homelessness Project 2020: Summary of Findings (Internal report for The Salvation Army Australia). Unpublished.



Impact of COVID-19

The Salvation Army family violence services experienced significant disruptions from the recent natural disasters and COVID-19. A substantial increase in demand is expected as restrictions ease and COVID-19 supports are wound back. Between March and April 2020, demand for supports offered by us through family and domestic violence flexible support packages grew by almost 60 per cent. In the same period, demand for safe accommodation and trauma-informed case management grew by 7 per cent.² The Salvation Army's experience identified a high proportion of women entering services on insecure or unstable temporary visas as they had no access to income and no other support. The pandemic also served to highlight the urgent need for more affordable housing and for additional support for victim-survivors, their children and perpetrators to enter into the private rental market.

To meet immediate needs, increased funding and access to brokerage funds, and adequate crisis payments would assist many victim-survivors meet the initial costs associated with entering a new lease, including bond, rent in advance and utility connection costs. Whilst the COVID-19 top-up of brokerage funds in Victoria was welcomed and needed, The Salvation Army experience even before COVID-19, identified that in many cases allocated brokerage funding is being exhausted within 9 months of receipt. Private rental assistance is also being depleted within 6 months of receipt.

COVID-19 also highlighted the need for continued investment in vicarious trauma support for the family violence workforce with high caseloads. Some practitioners have identified that working from home impacted their work/life boundaries and mental health due to the necessary absence of psychological support from the broader workforce and work colleagues. Lockdown restrictions also removed options to engage student placements to help manage workload demands.

The human cost to women and young people during the pandemic has been significant. Family violence has been exacerbated by job losses, financial insecurity and increased trauma particularly within vulnerable populations exposed to family violence. We expect that this will only increase with the easing of restrictions, leading to further increases in demand for family violence services and specific trauma-informed support for children and adolescents staying in temporary accommodation with their parent.

² The Salvation Army Australia. (2020). *TSA Client Profiles Report (March 2020)*. Unpublished.

The Salvation Army Australia. (2020). *TSA SHS Extracts Statistical Client Profiles Report (February to April 2020)*. Unpublished.

Key domestic violence experts have warned that the impacts of COVID-19 on women's safety are only just beginning to be felt and will compound the risks women face from abusive partners or family members for months and potentially years after isolation measures are lifted.³ As more victim-survivors are being isolated in their homes over an extended period of time, the government of Victoria would benefit from expanded electronic access to support and services.

Recommendations - COVID-19

- The Victorian Government increase funding to frontline family violence services and flexibility in the use of those funds (especially in relation to brokerage funds) to allow for services to tailor supports to meet the specific needs of victim-survivors and their children.
- The Victorian Government extend support to victim-survivors and perpetrators through webchat and other electronic means.
- The Victorian Government immediately increase funding to provide additional vicarious trauma support to a family violence workforce working from home.

³ Australian Women Against Violence Alliance. (2020, June 19). Experts warn COVID-19 impacts on women's safety just beginning. <https://awava.org.au/2020/05/08/media-release/2020-media-release/experts-warn-covid-19-impacts-on-womens-safety-just-beginning>



Service system reform – current state, experience and access to support

The Salvation Army applauds the Victorian Government's recognition of the devastating and often intergenerational impacts of family violence on the community following the Royal Commission. We believe that the public discourse and the conversation around family violence has improved underlying attitudes and beliefs that condone family violence. We acknowledge increased positive dialogue amongst services in relation to working with perpetrators, recognition of gender-based violence and impacts of violence on children and their development.

We commend the Victorian Government's commitment to integrated service delivery through the rollout of five Orange Door Support Hubs and mandatory prevention education through Respectful Relationships education in Victorian schools.⁴

The Salvation Army acknowledges the development of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (**FVISS**) and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (**MARAM**), which importantly is supported by a suite of policy, practice tools, training, legislation, and formal reviews that aims to change both the practice and culture around how professionals and organisations respond to family violence.

Whilst The Salvation Army remains confident that MARAM has the potential to greatly improve the response that both victim survivors and perpetrators receive, there is still a need to upskill and resource a wider range of practitioners in risk assessment to ensure that family violence can be identified earlier and responses can be more efficient and effective. This includes practitioners and frontline staff in housing, alcohol and other drugs (**AOD**), mental health, hospital and education services. The Salvation Army would like to extend access to specialist MARAM training to our frontline staff and financial counsellors.

We also congratulate the Victorian Government in establishing a code of practice developed by Domestic Violence Victoria that provides foundational guidance and organisational-level standards.⁵ Principles and standards guide quality service provision, clarify relationships and governance within the broader family violence response system. The building of referral pathways and coordinated responses supported by outcome measurement will go a long way to strengthening the integrity of the sector.

⁴ Premier of Victoria. (2019, March 28). *Three years of Reform to Keep Women and Children Safe* (Media release). <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/three-years-of-reform-to-keep-women-and-children-safe/>

⁵ Domestic Violence Victoria. (2020). *Code of Practice: Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim-Survivors*. http://dvvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/INTERIM-FINAL_2020_-Code-of-Practice_DVVic.pdf



Orange Door

We note that whilst the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended the establishment of 17 support and safety hubs in communities throughout Victoria, just five hubs have been established across Victoria to date: Barwon, Bayside Peninsula, Mallee, North Eastern Melbourne and Inner Gippsland. The Salvation Army is an active partner in the Bayside Peninsula and Inner Gippsland services.

The Salvation Army recommends future investment and research support for parent-child relationships and children and adolescents exposed to family violence. Knowledgeable and resourced case workers can provide effective parenting support, noting that at times pro-active follow up with clients is needed to facilitate family intervention. The Salvation Army's Men as Fathers' program address the specific needs of men in relation to their parenting relationships with their children.⁶ Our 'Men as Fathers' parenting practitioners establish a range of strategic partnerships within and across communities of Melton and Wyndham in Victoria. These partnerships have seen an outstanding participation increase from 51 in 2016, to 236 in 2018-19. We have also seen a 120 per cent increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers. The Men as Father's program continues to grow and develop in its understanding of the needs of men in their relationship with their children and sense of connection with their parenting.

Jim* and Melanie's* Story

Melanie and Jim have two young children. They first started going to The Salvation Army CaPSS wanting to make some changes, learn more about child development, and add to the parenting strategies they were already using. A parenting support practitioner worked with both parents to identify the struggles that they were having, and with Jim to help him manage and communicate his emotions in a way that provided a positive role model for his children.

To support Jim build confidence in his own parenting, the parenting support practitioner referred him to our Men as Fathers program. Working individually with Jim allowed him to share information about his situation and for the practitioner to highlight his existing strengths.

After several Men as Fathers sessions Jim was communicating with Melanie more freely, and was using stress-reducing techniques recommended by the program, as well as some he had found himself. Both Jim and Melanie reported that Jim was managing his anger better, having learnt how to communicate 'low level' emotions, and talking about rather than reacting to situations. Jim was a lot happier to spend time alone with his children, which he had not previously been comfortable doing, allowing him to be a more 'hands on' father.

**All names changed*

⁶ The Salvation Army. (2020). Children and Parenting Support Service (CaPSS). <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/sashes/programs/children-and-parenting-support-service-capss/>



Whilst The Salvation Army acknowledges the in-kind collaboration between agencies consolidated through governance and operational arrangements, the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (**VAGO**) report demonstrates the importance of coordinated access to services and case management to ensure direct funding and resources match demand and a collective understanding of the model across all services. A rushed implementation schedule, has resulted in individual hubs developing their own ways to coordinate services, manage demand and share information. Responses to clients therefore differ depending on where they live, rather than their needs. Gaps in performance monitoring, evaluation and governance also means services cannot measure or address these inconsistent service experiences.⁷

The Salvation Army's experience of the Victorian Support and Safety Hub (**Orange Door**) confirms the findings in the VAGO report. We have found that there are variances in the level of collaboration, issues around under-resourcing to meet increasing demands and delays to access parent-child relationship and perpetrator interventions. Our experience in Bayside Peninsula does however, recognise the strong collaboration with fathers via the Safe and Together models being implemented in this region.

The Salvation Army staff within Victoria have also noted that electronic access to Orange Door and increased resourcing to train and attract a workforce with multilingual skills and cultural ability is yet to be implemented.

Working with police

Coordinated responses also benefit from investing in early intervention approaches that work with police and vulnerable families. Some victim-survivors do not feel safe about reporting to police, but embedding family violence specialists within police units assists with recognition of gender-driven domestic and family violence. Specialists empower, advocate for and refer victim-survivors to services.

Resources should be made available for a national roll out of the Alexis Program, a family violence response model in Victoria that embeds family violence specialists within the police force and has been shown to reduce recidivism by up to 85 per cent.⁸ It should be noted that whilst the Alexis Program is achieving good outcomes, the program would further benefit from additional investment in case management for the perpetrator as well as the victim-survivor and their children.

7 Victorian Auditor General's Office. (2020). *Managing Support and Safety Hubs* (Independent assurances report to Parliament 2019-2020). https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/20200527-Support-Safety-Hubs-report_0.pdf

8 Harris, L., Powell, A. & Hamilton, G. (2017). *Alexis – Family Violence Response Model*. https://www.sarmy.org.au/Global/SArmy/Social/vsppu/Resources/SALV0006_Alexis%20Report_Online.pdf



Social housing

As the demand for long term affordable housing is not being met, there is inadequate stock of exit housing (whether through social housing or increased access to private rental assistance initiatives) for families who have left their homes due to violence. A lack of social housing stock means accommodation and private rentals remain unaffordable for many escaping violence. There is also a large gap in funding for transitional accommodation (not emergency) from a hotel to a home within their local area. Transitional arrangements provides an opportunity for women and their children to settle and make decisions about their life going forward and are less likely to cycle through the process of returning to the abuser due to poverty and housing shortages.

Workforce

Building a capable and responsive workforce is paramount to address violence and the health, wellbeing and safety of the workforce in the sector. Implementing a uniform approach to staff recruitment and retention including remuneration will facilitate capability benchmarking for those currently working within services or those interested in entering the family violence workforce. Family violence services are already finding it challenging to recruit well-trained staff or keep those who are currently in the system. The Salvation Army recognises the value in ongoing access to student placements and creating a jobs hub dedicated to the family violence workforce in Victoria.⁹ The hub would benefit in considering a diverse and different set of skills and experience to make the sector an attractive place to work for others who may not be considering working in the family violence sector.

It is critical that funding agreements acknowledge an organisation's role in providing adequate remuneration to facilitate recruitment and retention in the family violence workforce. Funding must also take into account an organisation's support the necessary occupational health and safety needs and the wellbeing of their workers. Leadership training is required to provide clinical supervision to deal with vicarious trauma and stress. Mentoring support is also important to help retain staff and provide long term career options and pathways in the sector.

⁹ Government of Victoria. (2020, June 5). *Family violence jobs: Make a difference in a career that's meaningful, challenging and rewarding*. <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-jobs>

Recommendations – Current state

- The Victorian Government address delays and long wait lists to access specialist trauma-informed case management for children, adolescents, parenting and perpetrator interventions.
- The Victorian Government upskill and resource training for a wider range of practitioners in MARAM including financial counsellors and frontline staff in housing, alcohol and other drugs (AOD), mental health, hospital and education settings.
- The Victorian Government address gaps in Orange Door performance monitoring, evaluation and governance to remove inconsistent intake and referral experiences across sites.
- The Victorian Government implement Royal Commission recommendations in relation to electronic access to Orange Door and increased resourcing to train and attract a workforce with multilingual skills and cultural ability.
- The Victorian Government work with business and the not-for-profit sector to provide the environment for shared funding, co-investment and incentives required to grow social housing stock for both victim-survivors and perpetrators.
- The Victorian Government invest in the renewal, refurbishment and significant upgrades of existing family violence refuges, public and social housing stock to extend the useful life of the housing assets.
- The Victorian Government invest in funding agreements that support attractive remuneration rates and occupation health, wellbeing and safety needs of the family violence workforce. Investment will facilitate recruitment and retention in Victoria family violence services.

Service system reform – what is still required

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Victorian Government's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led responses to violence via the *Dhelk Dja: Safe our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families agreement* including opportunities to access government funded cultural training.

From our experience, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have also mentioned to our staff that there is a lack of culturally appropriate family violence services that enable victim-survivors to safely disclose and build trust.

Women on temporary visas

There is a large cohort of women on temporary visas accessing our services. No access to government support and ineligibility to other support services means that many women with no income turn to our services to access food, advice and accommodation. Many victim-survivors tells us they are fearful of the retribution they could face from their husbands if they contact police and many are threatened with deportation and no access to their children.

We would encourage the Victorian Government through the new National Cabinet forum, to encourage the Commonwealth Government broadens the definition of family violence in the *Migrations Regulations 1994 (Cth)* to make it consistent with the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* and to ensure that people seeking to escape violence are entitled to crisis payments, regardless of their visa status.¹⁰

10.State of Victoria. (2016). *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations*. https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/1a_RFV_112ppA4_SummaryRecommendations.WEB_DXQyLhqv.pdf



Women and girls in forced marriages

Whilst we acknowledge the expansion of statutory examples of family violence to include forced marriage and dowry-related abuse, from our experience, the large majority of women in or facing forced marriages are unaware that they can access family violence services in Victoria. In addition there are many barriers to reporting forced marriage, including social isolation, a sense of obligation to submit to and/or remain in a forced marriage, shame and stigmatisation, and pressure to conform to traditions of male dominance.¹¹ Whilst from NSW, the case study below illustrates the importance of ensuring that the broader service system, including police and first responders are equipped to identify indicators of forced marriage and respond appropriately.¹²

Forced marriage

Police in Sydney contacted The Salvation Army after a 19-year-old woman reported to them that she could not return home as she was being forced to be married. The police were unaware of the federal framework and had limited knowledge of how to respond to the young woman's unique circumstances. Officers contacted a chaplain of The Salvation Army with whom they had a relationship, who informed them of The Salvation Army's anti-slavery programs and assisted to make a referral to the Freedom Partnership. Had the officers not had the relationship with that chaplain, the victim may not have been linked with appropriate care.

In another case, child protection authorities became involved with a family where the mother was arranging the forced marriage of her two daughters overseas. Having received no information or training on forced marriage, the primary worker was unsure of what to do, how to respond and what other agencies were appropriate to include in the case response.

Fortunately, the worker's colleague had just attended a community presentation on forced marriage given by The Salvation Army and provided him with relevant contact information. Subsequently, authorities intervened to safeguard the girls from being taken overseas for marriage; however, as they were unwilling to cooperate with federal police, the girls were unable to access the Support Program and were referred to an alternative service provider. Had the worker's colleague not attended the presentation on forced marriage, this case could have taken a very different direction.

11. Richards, K. & Lyneham, S. (2014). Help-seeking strategies of victim/survivors of human trafficking involving partner migration. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*, 468. Australian Institute of Criminology.

<https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi468>

12 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand. (2019). *Opportunities to respond to forced marriage within Australia's domestic and family violence framework* (Issues paper). https://goodshep.org.au/media/2423/g sanz-issues-paper_opportunities-to-respond-to-forced-marriage-within-australias-domestic-and-family-violence-framework.pdf



Women with pets

It is important that the Implementation Monitor understands the experiences of women escaping violence with pets. In many cases, pets may be a woman's only or closest friend and companion. Additionally, the threat of violence against a pet if a woman seeks help is very real. Accommodation options with support services available that also allow pets are few and the broader issue of a shortage of appropriate housing options again limits exit pathways. Our service delivery experience has emphasised the importance of pets in providing ongoing comfort and security. There is also anecdotal evidence of the positive impact of pets on mental health. We work with other providers to find solutions for women who present with pets but the lack of appropriate options is an issue that the sector faces.

Emma's Story*

Emma entered a Salvation Army service after spending several months living rough. She was a victim-survivor of domestic violence who ran from her home with her only friend, her dog Tasha*. During the time Emma was living rough Tasha continued by her side day and night. Tasha not only acted in the capacity of friend and confidant but as protector and guard at night.

When Emma first entered the service we were not able to immediately find appropriate accommodation so we established a temporary arrangement whereby Tasha stayed with the RSPCA's boarding program while Emma stayed with our service. This created a huge amount of stress and anxiety for Emma. So much so that she chose to leave the service in the middle of the night to sleep outside of the RSPCA and then return in the morning.

As soon as possible we were able to negotiate with a community housing provider to provide accommodation for both Emma and Tasha but the stress and anxiety of the separation would not have been necessary if there was sufficient appropriate housing options.

**all names changed*

Women with disability

Our experience has shown that women with disability face specific challenges that are not always addressed in mainstream services. There is extensive evidence that women with disability are more vulnerable to family violence and also face greater barriers to accessing justice.¹³ From a service perspective, there are additional needs that need to be factored into the physical environment, community aspects and support offering to properly accommodate physical, sensory, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. It is also critical to note that 'women with disabilities' is a broad group of women who must be afforded the dignity of appropriate individualised support. Additional tailored accommodation options are required to meet the immediate needs and the broad issues around availability of accessible housing stock need to be addressed to create exit pathways for women with disability.

LGBTQI

The Salvation Army has significantly invested in providing specialist training and embedding inclusive practice to ensure equity of access, service and experience for women who identify as LGBTQI. For our services in Victoria, this includes working to achieve Rainbow Tick accreditation via Rainbow Health Victoria. The experience of ensuring an inclusive practice has reinforced that deliberate and sensitive effort is needed to ensure that services are welcoming and accessible for women who identify as LGBTQI.

Our experience also identifies a need to increase support services for LGBTQI women experiencing family violence, including housing options and improved access to frontline specialist knowledge and understanding of the unique challenges faced by this group of women.

We commend the two-year workforce capacity pilot project run by Rainbow Health Victoria and the recently released *Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities* to help practitioners and policy makers further develop programs and activities to address violence against people from LGBTQI communities.

13 Maher, J. et al. (2018). *Women, disability and violence: Barriers to accessing justice: Final report* (Research report). Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. <https://d2m9gno7zhxqg.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/19024604/Maher-et-al-Horizons-Research-Report-1.pdf>

See also extensive work done by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability on the incidence and impact of family violence.



Young people and adolescents

The Salvation Army's experience is that current access to case management for children and young people is either not available or, due to a lack of trauma-informed specialists, long wait lists exist, sometimes up to a year in advance. The Salvation Army supports expansion of adolescent violence services that respond to violence both as a victim-survivor of family violence or as perpetrators of violence either within the home or in intimate relationships. Case management should also be expanded to address age-informed attitudes towards gender and violence. Opportunities to educate adolescents through the school education system, similar to the mandatory Respectful Relationships program for primary school students in Victoria, should be considered.

Single women

Sufficient social housing is a critical part of a comprehensive plan to enable victim-survivors transition to safe accommodation. The Salvation Army recommends consideration of an increased stock of long term self-contained apartments for single women and women over the age of 55 escaping violence. Current market prices mean private rentals are inaccessible for these groups of women.

Families at high risk

There is currently a small government investment for families at high risk of violence to address family functioning, family dynamics and the role of all family members, including those with a disability. The Salvation Army would welcome opportunities for Functional Family Therapy (FFT) programs to be included within a therapeutic model of care as preventative measures to address conflict resolution and improve communication that engages and builds resilience within the family unit, not just with the individual.



Recommendation – What is still required

- The Victorian Government continue to invest in culturally appropriate family violence services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- The Victorian Government, through the new National Cabinet forum, encourage the Commonwealth Government to broaden the definition of family violence in the *Migrations Regulations 1994* (Cth) to make it consistent with the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) and to ensure that people seeking to escape violence are entitled to crisis payments (regardless of their visa status).
- The Victorian Government continue to invest in the broader service system, including police and first responders to identify indicators of forced marriage and respond appropriately.
- The Victorian Government increase support services for LGBTQI women, women with pets and women with disability experiencing family violence, including housing options and improved access to frontline specialist knowledge and understanding of the unique challenges faced by this group of women.
- The Victorian Government invest in an increase supply of trauma-informed adolescent specialists to address long wait lists.
- The Victorian Government invest in aged informed attitudes towards gender and violence through the high school education system, similar to the mandatory Respectful Relationships program for primary school students in Victoria.
- The Victorian Government work invest in increased stock of long-term self-contained apartments for single women and women over the age of 55 escaping violence. Current market prices mean private rentals are inaccessible for these groups of women.
- The Victorian Government invest in families at high risk to address family function, family dynamics and role of all members in the prevention of family violence.

Legal support for victim-survivors

Whilst The Salvation Army does not provide specialised services within the court system, we often come alongside victim-survivors as they interact with the system. In support of those recommendations, The Salvation Army can illustrate some of the common issues we see when supporting victim-survivors of family violence.

Salvation Army staff experience has identified flexible brokerage packages are often used to cover legal costs, displacing much needed funds to transition into safe accommodation. During the 2019-20 financial year, 18 clients from Bayside Peninsula accessed flexible support packages to a value of nearly \$62,000 to pay for legal fees related to family violence.

Many of the people who we serve, rely on community based legal centres for assistance, however some perpetrators lock the victim-survivor out of system by booking more than one service at a time. Due to demand, many community legal centres have capacity to provide advice rather than represent victim-survivors, forcing them to go into significant debt by accessing private lawyers.

The legal system must learn from streamlining and prioritising family violence cases during COVID-19, including introduction of risk screening and triage. Recent research by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (**ANROWS**) also identified a need to improve judicial officers' knowledge and understanding of perpetrator interventions as part of the judicial decision-making process.¹⁴

Recommendations – Legal support

- The Victorian Government support ongoing access to formal family violence assistance for the victim-survivor once engagement with the family law system has ceased to facilitate safer parenting orders, financial equity and keeping perpetrators accountable.

Perpetrator intervention programs

The Salvation Army experience identifies that there are not many intervention options for perpetrators. The Salvation Army strongly advocate for increased investment in a range of new men's perpetrator programs and trials to address prevention, early intervention and post-violence interventions.

¹⁴ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2020). *The views of Australian judicial officers on domestic and family violence perpetrator interventions* (Research to policy and practice, 13/2020). https://d2rn9gno7zhxqg.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/08081802/ANROWS-Fitz-Gibbon_RtPP.pdf



More perpetrator parenting programs are needed that focus on and use the dialogue, of children rather than the adult within family violence, and highlight the developmental damage to the child from violence. These programs act as a more powerful way to engage perpetrators as fathers and develop skills on how to become good fathers. A continuum of perpetrator intervention options must also include outreach programs, including support and case management, for perpetrators and therapeutic counselling of perpetrators whilst in prison and when exiting prison. The Salvation Army is currently working with No to Violence to deliver by December 2020 a model of care that includes perpetrator programs.

Additional funding and resourcing is also needed to diversify and expand other options. Funding agreements currently do not provide adequate funding for the case management of perpetrators, or in some cases, do not fund it at all, which often results in recidivism. We strongly recommend that case management of perpetrators be coupled with access to emergency accommodation, so victims-survivors have the option to safely remain in the home. Lessons can be learnt from a recent evaluation of 864 men in New Zealand's Gandhi Nivas program that offers emergency accommodation and free counselling to men, with almost 60 per cent of perpetrators who accessed the service not reoffending.¹⁵

Our experience is that there is a need for individual pre-group case management to mitigate the risk of perpetrators using group sessions to further abuse their ex-partner. In these cases, individuation programs that focus on understanding and healing attachment issues with their partner and children can help them to a point of being group ready. The Salvation Army Doorway services also help men access free counselling services in areas where there is a lack of access to family violence men's services or in cases where men have experienced further harm and trauma from other men in group behavioural sessions.

The Salvation Army strongly recommends a significant increase in investment into perpetrator intervention and research and extension to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse to inform the further development of perpetrator interventions. We reiterate the importance of hearing directly from victim-survivors and the need for additional direct research with women and victims-survivors of family violence.

Further, while the effects of COVID-19 are still being realised, we anticipate that there will be significant need for voluntary programs for perpetrators who either have used violence for the first time or have identified that they are at risk of using violence.

15 Morgan, M., Jennens, E., Coombes, L., Connor, G. & Denne, S. (2020). Gandhi Nivas 2014-2019: A statistical description of client demographics and involvement in Police recorded Family Violence occurrences. Palmerston North, Aotearoa New Zealand, Massey University.

Recommendation – Perpetrator intervention

- The Victorian Government significantly increase funding for research into and supply of perpetrator interventions including voluntary programs for perpetrators using violence for the first time. Programs and reforms that move perpetrators out of their home must be complemented with housing options for perpetrators and access to brokerage funds.
- The Victorian Government invest in parenting programs that focus on the role of the perpetrator as a parent.
- The Victorian Government invest in the expansion of emergency accommodation and case management services for perpetrators of family violence.

Conclusion

The Salvation Army wishes to thank the Victorian Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor for the opportunity to provide a submission.

We encourage the Implementation Monitor to address the lessons learnt from the VAGO report to ensure responses for victim-survivors and perpetrators are efficient, aligned, informed and safe.

Ongoing future reforms require continued investment in frontline services and its workforce; growth of social housing stocks; increased investment in perpetrator interventions, responding to additional needs of vulnerable cohorts, and removing opportunities for ongoing perpetrator abuse within the Family Law system.

The Salvation Army believes that Australia can be strengthened as a result of addressing areas of disadvantage, including those experiencing violence who have been disproportionately affected and deserve greater attention to ensure everyone feels safe and free from harm.

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a presence in 128 countries. Operating in Australia since 1880, The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social services and programs for people experiencing hardship, injustice and social exclusion.

The Salvation Army Australia has a national operating budget of over \$700 million and provides more than 1,000 social programs and activities through networks of social support services, community centres and churches across the country. Programs include:

- Financial inclusion, including emergency relief
- Homelessness services
- Youth services
- Family and domestic violence services
- Alcohol, drugs and other addictions
- Chaplaincy
- Emergency and disaster response
- Aged care
- Employment services

As a mission driven organisation, The Salvation Army seeks to reduce social disadvantage and create a fair and harmonious society through holistic and person-centred approaches that reflect our mission to share the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

Further Information

The Salvation Army would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission should any further information be of assistance.

Further information can be sought from Major Paul Hateley, National Head of Government Relations, at government.relations@salvationarmy.org.au or on 0413 830 201.

