



SUBMISSION TO THE FAMILY VIOLENCE IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR

Anglicare Victoria

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1 Anglicare Victoria: Family violence support, recovery and prevention

AV welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Family Violence Implementation Monitor on the impact of the Royal Commission on Family Violence and the implementation of its 227 recommendations.

Anglicare Victoria is one of Victoria's largest providers of services for children, families and young people, and is a recognised leader in working with children affected by family violence. We have pioneered therapeutic, recovery focussed services for children in Victoria over a twenty year period. In 2016, we were recognised by the Royal Commission into Family Violence as one of few providers in Victoria doing joint child-parent work at that time (FVRC 2016, Vol II:137).

Examples across our regions of our innovative work include group work, art therapy and child-parent therapy programs such as Reclaim, Renew, Reconnect (East), Child Focussed Counselling and Support (North), Growing Connections (North) and Beyond the Violence (South). TRAK Forward is also available across a number of DHHS areas, following on from our successful demonstration pilot.

Anglicare Victoria has developed these programs in response to the stated needs of victim-survivors that there was a gap in the sector for their children. The programs have been refined over many years through an ongoing co-design process with women and children. Following rigorous evaluations, Beyond the Violence and Growing Connections are now both recognised as "promising programs" under the Australian Institute of Family Studies Evidence Based Program framework. Anglicare Victoria also delivers training to the sector in working with children who have experienced family violence, including the 3 day Beyond the Violence training package, which assists participants to:

- Understand the impacts of Family Violence on women and children
- Explore strength-based, participant driven group formats
- Identify techniques and strengths for group work, engagement and facilitation
- Increase skills and confidence in supporting families who have experienced violence
- Practice group work skills in a family violence context, within a parents', children's and combined family group.

Anglicare Victoria (AV) been involved in a range of reforms flowing from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, including the Orange Door (in 2 of 5 launch sites), two therapeutic demonstration projects, pilots of support programs in women's' prisons and three perpetrator intervention trials with Caring Dads, A Better Way. Anglicare Victoria also operates a family violence refuge, is a key provider of Men's Behaviour Change programs, delivers adolescent family violence programs and provides a range of family violence counselling services. In 2017-18 we supported 1819 people through our specialist family violence programs.

Responding to Family Violence is a major component of our work across our other services. Our data shows that up to 70% of cases across our Family Services and Child FIRST programs have Family Violence listed as one of the concerns. In 2017-18, we supported 11,200 families for whom family violence was a current or historical concern.

2 How the family violence service system, and users' experience of it, has changed since the Royal Commission

The Victorian government's Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) was Australia's first and represented a major step forward in recognising and responding to the prevalence and wide-ranging impacts of family violence in Victoria.

The government's response, including the \$2.9 billion investment in development and services in the five years that followed represents a significant step forward in addressing unmet need for services and making the systemic changes that will underpin the achievement of better outcomes. The importance of this continued investment has enabled a number of significant improvements to the safety and wellbeing of Victorian women, children and families, and should not be underestimated.

2.1 Service access and effectiveness

A key achievement of the RCFV and the government's commitment to implementing its recommendation was the recognition that there was significant service reform required to both improve the quality and effectiveness and responses and to meet the unmet demand for support and response. Access to services has since been significantly improved in a number of ways.

The development and ongoing implementation of The Orange Door has provided a highly visible access point for people seeking support, and established a framework for a more cohesive and coordinated approach to referral, assessment and service delivery in those areas where they have been established. The alignment of special family violence services and integrated family support that The Orange Door represents is vital, and AV looks forward to its further development and improvement.

A key part of service development and reform has been the greater investment in evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and service models which are able to deliver real and demonstrable impacts, though unfortunately many of these initiatives continue to be funded as pilots. Examples include Caring Dads, a Canadian model which AV has been delivering in partnership with Children's Protection Society that teaches men about the impact of family violence on their kids and ante importance of a respectful relation with their children's mother, and Anglicare Victoria's Breaking the Cycle. TRAK Forward is another example of a program, delivered in partnership across DHHS areas, that provides therapeutic support for people who have experienced family violence, as outlined in Figure 1: TRAK Forward.

TRAK Forward

TRAK Forward (Therapeutic Recovery for Adults and Kids) is an innovative and highly successful model of therapeutic recovery for victim-survivors. It supports parents/carers, kids and young people who have been impacted by family violence and are ready to move on with their lives

TRAK Forward delivers a comprehensive package of therapeutic options to respond to the diverse needs of clients and families, operating alongside a key worker. The key worker undertakes intake, assessment and goal setting and ensures each client or family is linked to an appropriate package of supports that is responsive to their stage in the recovery journey, and leads to a sustainable recovery.

TRAK Forward has been designed to respond to the diverse needs of victim-survivors, including children and young people, Aboriginal victim survivors, victim survivors from culturally diverse backgrounds, LGBTI identified peoples, people with disabilities and older people. We achieve this by:

- Delivering services that are inclusive, culturally responsive and safe.
- Partnering with organisations that span both specialist family violence and child and family service sectors.
- Partnership with organisations that have credibility and expertise in working with the diverse needs of victim-survivors, including Drummond Street services and InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- Specific services and responses that will be co-designed with our partners in each Area, for instance Arabic speaking group work programs, or recovery groups for LGBTI identified people
- Providing outreach, brokerage, person-centred, individually tailored and holistic services to every client we come in contact with
- Referral pathways and strong local links with a range of organisations and groups providing services to LGBTI identified people, people with disability, culturally diverse people and older people.

External evaluations show that after participating in TRAK Forward, children are more confident, settled, less isolated and fearful, felt safe, had improved school and social relationships and strengthened family relationships. Adult victim-survivors are shown to have improved confidence and self-worth, improved economic, social and emotional wellbeing, and a sense of connection to the community.

‘It is amazing that it is holistic, working with the two of us. The key worker support is great, the educators are great. The way they work together is amazing.’

Parent in TRAK Forward Evaluation (Absler & Mitchell 2018).

Figure 1: TRAK Forward

Safe and Together™

To strengthen our organisational wide response to family violence, we are now embedding the Safe & Together™ Model across our organisation as a core component of our work.

Safe and Together is a US based model that supports families where the perpetrator still has contact with the children, to reduce risk and prevent harm.

Anglicare Victoria is making a significant investment to train a number of staff to the level of being Safe and Together Certified Trainers. This strategic direction strengthens our capability to understand and respond to perpetrators behaviour patterns, their impact on child and family functioning, partnering with survivors of family violence and engaging directly with perpetrators.

Anglicare Victoria is also a partner in the Safe & Together Addressing Complexity (STACY) research project, with Melbourne University and the Safe & Together Institute, focusing on how workers assess and manage the complexity of the intersections of Mental Health, AOD use and Family Violence while maintaining the Family Violence focus.

AV has also strongly supported the further development of services which respond to the diversity of people's backgrounds and experience, and the need for service responses to better meet those needs that followed the RCFV. Key areas that have benefitted from greater recognition and support include for LGBTIQ + people, young people and adolescents, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example, AV has been proud to partner with VACCA on the implementation of *A Better Way*, a program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander men who have used violence in their relationships. *A Better Way* has been welcomed by the community and continues to deliver positive results (see Figure 4: A Better Way).

Given the prevalence and wide-ranging impacts of family violence, the range of training initiatives that have been implemented to strengthen both specialist and generalist service responses have also played an important part in improving client service and are an important part of broader efforts to develop and more responsive and client focussed service culture. AV is also making significant investment in building workforce capacity, as outlined further on this page.

While concerns about stigma and systemic "victim-blaming" remain, particularly where there is involvement of statutory authorities including Child Protection, this has improved significantly. Training for universal service providers (e.g. staff in health, education and early childhood) which has supported greater literacy about and understanding of family violence and the supports, services and referral pathways available has also been a positive step forward. This has been well supported by the MARAM framework with its emphasis on perpetrator accountability.

While there are a range of programs and services that have benefitted from this additional investment, some key areas of improvement noted by AV staff include

- The development of regional Police Family Violence specialist teams, which has seen more effective investigations, better information sharing with other services, and much improved response to identified risks, including calls for welfare checks.

Figure 2: Safe and Together

- The availability of Family Violence Flexible Support Packages, which have been an important addition that have increases services ability to respond to family's needs and keep them safe.

Family Safety Victoria's leadership in developing a range of Practice Guidance Notes, with the support and input of the sector and other experts, has also been timely and a significant support to the workforce. Similarly, the work of the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) has made good progress and provide valuable input to the reform process.

2.2 Coordination and information sharing

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and the accompanying practice guides and resources has been very positive, and plays a critical role in enabling The Orange Door and other related responses to work effectively. Continued investment in the development and implementation of this framework is a vital part of providing an effective contemporary and timely response. As well as enabling more timely and effective response and coordination, the MARAM reflects a more contemporary and evidence-based understanding of the complexities of family violence, its wide-ranging impacts.

Information sharing facilitated by both the MARAM and the establishment of the Central Information Point is another key enabler of the effectiveness of response. AV staff report that there have been significant improvements in this area that contribute to enhanced client safety, as well as the safety of our own staff. It reflects a more appropriate balance of the important principles of privacy and the need to reduce the risk that victim/survivors will experience further harm.

One of the key improvements in the information sharing framework has been the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS). As one of Victoria's largest children's and family services, this is an important support for our work in keeping children and families safe, and enabling us to effectively fulfil our role in providing integrated family services safety, and in a more timely way. This is a key element in enabling family services like ourselves to provide the support necessary to both support recovery and, importantly, provide the evidence-based interventions that will help prevent further instances or family violence and promote more positive family functioning, as well as working effectively with other agencies to address and respond to Child Protection concerns.

Caring Dads

AV is delivering Caring Dads to men in Gippsland and Melbourne's west as part of a three-year, Australia-first trial in partnership with Children's Protection Society and the Victorian Government.

Caring Dads is an internationally acclaimed Canadian model that teaches men about the impact of family violence on their kids and the importance of a respectful relationship with their children's mother.

A 17-week early intervention program, Caring Dads targets men who have used violence, or are at high risk of doing so, through group work that encourages them to stop controlling, abusive and neglectful behaviour.

By connecting with other men, they learn how to cope with frustrating situations in healthy ways and to strengthen and repair relationships with their kids.

Anglicare was selected by the Victorian Government to run the three-year pilot program.

Our involvement is another example of Anglicare's role implementing reforms recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which recognised the importance of intervening early to hold men to account for their violent behaviour.

Figure 3: Caring Dads

2.3 Changing behaviours and prevention

The expansion of services following the RCFV has also seen an increased focus on services and programs that work with perpetrators to both promote accountability and address and prevent violent and coercive behaviours, and promote respectful and healthy relationships. The continued support for Men's Behaviour Change, Caring Dads and related programs are vital if we are to increase safety and reduce risk. Further, many people who use violence in their relationships have often been the subject of family violence themselves, so continued efforts to address perpetrator accountability and behaviour is an important part of long-term change, and of preventing further inter-generational harm.

In addition, the provision of limited funding for case management support is a very positive step, and a key part of achieving long term change for people with complex needs who use violence in their relationships and their families.

It is also important to note the significant shift that has occurred – with the support of both broad-based information campaigns and the roll-out of specific respectful relationships programs – in community understanding of the impact of both family violence and gender-based violence more broadly. This has improved both public safety and helped reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for both victim/survivors of family violence and of those who use it in their relationships.

3 Looking forward: What is still required in the family violence reforms

While the RCFV has seen significant and wide-ranging improvement in a range of areas, opportunities to improve the quality of the service response and the safety of vulnerable women, children, young people and families remain as discussed below.

3.1 Outstanding recommendations

AV acknowledges that some of the RCFV recommendations are yet to be implemented, and many of the areas we have identified as requiring further action fall into this category. Areas of particular concern to AV include

- Rollout of remaining Orange Doors and support their effective operation informed by progress to date, to ensure that communities in need, particularly those in rural and regional areas, can benefit (Recs 37-40 & 182),
- Further improvement to the state-wide capacity for effective information sharing, supported by appropriate investment in IT (recs 6 & 7)
- Ongoing improvements in the availability of safe, stable, family-friendly and culturally appropriate crisis and emergency response housing options, including the availability of refuge and crisis accommodation options that can meet the needs of children and young people (recs 14,15,16. 18, 20, 21 & 24)
- Development of practice guidelines for working with people who use violence in their relationships, informed by continuing review and development of the evidence base to ensure effective practice and that outcomes are achieved, coupled with continued funding to address demand, including ongoing support for those evidence-based pilots and trials that are delivering positive results(recs 87-90 & 92).

This process should consider the impact of long-term follow up and review of participants and the impact that it has on sustaining behaviour change.

AV recognises the important work of the Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions, and recognises that significant inroads have been made in the implementation of its 22 recommendations.

- Readily accessible financial literacy support and financial counselling (rec 121)
- Strengthening of the service response for adolescents, including ongoing development of the evidence-base on the appropriate service models for this cohort that are age-appropriate, reflect and respond to their developmental needs, and are trauma-informed, recognising that many young people who use violence in the home have also witnessed or been victims of it. Better availability of and access to services is also required, including the availability of appropriate accommodation options (Recs 123 & 124).
- Continued support for Aboriginal communities to implement recommendations of the Family Violence Ten Year Plan improve availability and cultural appropriateness of services, guided by the governments ongoing commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, and including ongoing support for culturally appropriate, evidence based programs such as A Better Way. (Recs 144, 146-148 & 152)
- Continued support for LGBTIQ+ people including the availability of specialist supports, and well as ensuring that 'mainstream' services are providing appropriate, responsive and welcoming service to LGBTIQ people.

These are key areas of development and we look forward to the remaining recommendations being implemented. AV is keen to assist in this process wherever it can.

3.2 Additional development areas

3.2.1 Responding to the needs of children

There remains a need for further direct support for children who have experienced the impacts of family violence, and for the system as a whole to be more responsive to the voices and needs of children.

These children have a right to support, and effective support provides an opportunity to limit impacts that can last a lifetime. For example, as noted by the Sentencing Advisory Council has noted in their

A Better Way

A Better Way is funded as part of the Family Safety Victoria perpetrator interventions trials across Bayside Peninsula and Southern Melbourne.

A Better Way is a partnership between two mainstream and ACCO services. VACCA staff sit within Anglicare Victoria's office and report on a day to day basis to an Anglicare Victoria team leader, as well as receive additional cultural supervision and support from a VACCA team leader.

A Better Way has seen AV and VACCA work together on a cultural co-design process that adapted the Safe & Together™ Model for the Aboriginal community in Victoria, supported by

- Oversight from the Orange Door Cultural Advisory Group
- Engagement and advice from trusted Elders
- Engagement with the Southern Metropolitan Region Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group
- Cultural design workshops with Aboriginal staff and community.

Figure 4: A Better Way

‘Crossover Kids’ report¹, 67% of young people in the study group (children involved in the youth justice system with at least one child protection report) were the subject of at least one report raising concerns about physical harm, and 41% had a substantiated report of physical harm. The report also notes “previous research suggesting that many children who use violence in the home do so after their own exposure to family violence, including witnessing intimate partner violence against their mother as well as being the direct victim of violence.”

While the focus on responses focussing on adults including both those who use violence and victim/survivors in recovery is welcome, it is important that services for children are also available, where they can meet other children with a shared experience and explore non-violent behaviours. Children who participated in AV’s Beyond the Violence program indicated they wanted more children to benefit from the kind of support they had experienced, and it is important to hear their message.

3.2.2 Strengthening the interface between legal and support systems

The reforms introduced to both policing and legal responses have been significant and positive. AV supports people involved in the justice system in a range of ways, including providing Respectful Relationships program in prisons and delivering mandated Men’s Behaviour Change programs. AV believes there is further opportunities to improve family violence responses and outcomes by continuing to develop the way that these systems are linked with and utilise support and therapeutic interventions

For example, AV practitioners who work with men who use violence have emphasised the value of being able to engage as soon as possible after an incident has occurred e.g. a police engagement that has triggered an L17 report. At these moments, there is strong external motivation for them to engage in programs and processes that will help prevent future violence.

AV recommends that models which allow fast, individualised and assertive engagement with perpetrators are further explored and developed. Examples of this might include the police facilitating direct engagement between the alleged perpetrator and a service such as AV while longer term legal processes were pursued, supported by an appropriate practice and civil orders.

It should also be noted that many mothers that AV works with continue to report instances where Family Law processes are abused by perpetrators as a form of punishment and control, using the such as deliberate challenge and delay. They also continue to express concerns that the Family Law Court does not adequately take previous history of violent and coercive behaviour into account in its decisions e.g. in regard to custody and parenting. Further, legal practitioners and officers of the court are not always well versed in the impacts of trauma, resulting in victims being perceived as chaotic or disorganised and this unfairly influencing decision-making. Last but not least, there remains a perception that women are penalised for failing to protect children from a perpetrator rather than the perpetrator being held accountable for their behaviour by the Court.

3.3 Implementation, quality and outcomes

In this first five years since the RCFV, it is appropriate that there has been a robust and detailed oversight of the implementation of the 227 recommendations, and AV commends both the

¹ https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Crossover_Kids_Report_2.pdf p. 44

establishment of the Implementation Monitor and the valuable and diligent accountability that the Monitor has provided. Now that so many positive changes have been achieved, it is timely that as a sector and a community we consider not just whether or not implementation has been completed, but also how effectively that implementation has been achieved, and whether or not the desired outcomes are being met.

3.3.1 The Orange Door

As noted above, AV is directly involved in a number of the Orange Doors, and acknowledges that there is significant variation between each both in terms of their stage of development and the local circumstances that have implemented on both their establishment and operation. However, reflection and discussion with staff does allow some common themes to emerge which are directly impact on people's timely access to and experience of services.

- Demand pressures impacting on the ability for The Orange Door to achieve its service goals, contributing to waiting times and at times impacting on the quality of assessments.
- 'Teething problems' around referral and flow persist in some cases, with log-jams in certain work areas creating barriers to access, and lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities leading to instances of confusion and 'hand-balling'.
- Concerns that resource constraints have contributed to instances of inappropriate referrals, such as people being referred to a service because it is more readily available, not because it is the most appropriate. An example of this might be a person who clearly requires a specialist family violence service being referred to integrated family services because there is insufficient funded capacity in the specialist family violence service.
- Concerns that in some cases the response being provided is simply not fast enough, leaving those seeking support vulnerable, and contributing to the loss of vital 'windows' for effective engagement and intervention. An example cited of this in consultations was L17s being delayed by up to a week before being passed on.

There are a number of factors contributing to these issues, including the volume and distribution of funding allocations, the need to continue to develop, supported by MARAM, shared frameworks of understanding and service delivery across different professions and organisations, and continued development of information sharing resources and tools.

These issues also reflect the importance of utilising sound and measured approaches to implementation and change management. Anecdotal feedback also suggests that there is significant variation in practice across different areas/sites. However, some are working well and have developed strong relationships. This is opportunity for greater shared learnings, supported by rigorous review that identifies and disseminates the most effective practices and models, and ensures that effectiveness is systemic and embedded in service design, and not just reliant on individual and organisational goodwill. Safe and Together (see Figure 2: Safe and Together **Error! Reference source not found.**) provides a good example how program design facilitates effective team work and promotes improved practice.

3.3.2 Evidence and evaluation

It is important that we learn from the experience of implementing these major new initiatives, and draw on that experience to continue to develop our capacity as service providers, and as a community, to develop more integrated, accessible and effective services that meet clients' needs. These learnings will inform not just the ongoing of services and support addressing family violence, but also community based service delivery more broadly as agencies across a range of portfolio areas seek to provide 'integrated' services and find the most effective ways to achieve it particularly in regard to

- Multi-agency work to address complex problems, and the supporting mechanisms that support effective coordination, collaboration and learning
- Information sharing mechanisms, policies and technologies
- Referral pathways design and implementation, including how these are safely managed when there are surges in demand or where there is persistent mis-match between demand for services and the volume of service available.

AV also therefore looks forward to the further work to deliver on recommendations number 201, 203, 226 & 225 which will strengthen the focus on evaluation and continued development of the evidence base in relation to family violence service delivery, which in many cases (e.g. models for adolescents and children) remains under-developed in the local context.

This should support and be supported by the continuing work to establish an effective outcomes framework and associated measures. This is critical to ensuring that, in the long term, we continue to improve and make informed, evidence-based decisions about both practice and future investment.

3.3.3 MARAM

While there is strong support for the MARAM and the significant step forward that it represents, it has also been noted that its consistent and effective implementation remains a work in progress, and work on embedding the tool will need to continue if it to operate effectively as a shared framework.

Implementation is still very new, and in some cases incomplete. For example, staff have cited occasions where some workers involved in managing a case might still be using the CRAF when others have and shifted to the MARAM framework, meaning that differences in language and approach are still needing to be negotiated.

Where roll-out had occurred, there can still be difference in interpretation and use, emphasising the need for continued joint working across professions and agencies to address consistency and approach. This should include ensuring that a focus on the impact of family violence on children and their safety is embedded into the response, and that in responding all services are considering the child's needs and wellbeing.

MARAM has also been very positive in providing a common framework to support integrated responses between family violence and family support services and specialist services such as alcohol and other drug services and mental health services. These issues have been identified as both increasing risk of family violence occurring. Similarly, experience of family violence increases risk of poor mental health and harmful substance use. It is therefore important that we continue to strengthen work to ensure that family violence services and specialist services can work together to identify and address these dynamic risk factors as they change.

As noted above, AV also eagerly awaits the further work on the MARAM to incorporate an evidence-based framework for working with perpetrators of family violence.

3.3.4 Information sharing

Mechanisms for information sharing also remain a work-in-progress but remain critical. As with MARAM, it is noted that systems and practices are still under development, and that therefore consistency of access and use is also developing.

This is a key issue in ensuring safety of both clients and staff, and will need continued attention and investment to improve, including ensuring that there are appropriate information sharing in place state-wide to support appropriate referrals to and from practitioners who do not have direct family violence or Orange Door involvement (e.g. enhanced maternal and child health), as well as between services.

3.4 Further areas for investment

The implementation of the RCFV recommendations has involved the development of a number of new and innovative programs that are yielding very positive results. However, it is concerning that a number of these continue to be funded on a pilot or short-term basis, creating uncertainty for both participants, for workforces. Importantly, this lack of certainty also inhibits the ability for long-term investment in evaluation and program improvement. AV would like to see this uncertainty addressed, supported by the implementation of recommendation 218 which calls for adjusted budget systems to prevent and respond to family violence.

Further investment to target specific areas of need also need to be addressed. In addition to adolescents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people noted above, there is further work required to meet the needs and culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians, and ensure that Orange Door and other relevant services are able to provide culturally appropriate responses. Examples include AV's Chinese Men's Behaviour Change program in the eastern region.

Making programs such as this more readily available requires investment not just in those services, but strong engagement with community leaders and organisations. The basics such as a comprehensive suite of information and resources in local community languages – and tailored to those audiences so that information is appropriately framed and described - are a good start. However, a deeper engagement is required to ensure that family violence prevention and response are able to work within a community context as it applies to a range of factors such as gender roles and expectations, the role of family, and family and community hierarchies of authority and decision-making, tradition and religion.

We note with concern the particular vulnerability of people experiencing violence who are refugees and asylum seekers, or have some other form of temporary visa. These people often have limited access to services, and fear that seeking help will harm the chances of them and their family been granted leave to stay is a disincentive for engagement. This insecure status also creates additional opportunities for coercion and control that are not present for others.

It is also important to recognise the important role that a range of services outside the family violence service system make to supporting the development of positive family relationships and thereby reducing the risk of family violence. These include

- Parent and child support, including but not limited to programs that specifically address problems experienced by families to support recovery such as Beyond the Violence.
- Financial counselling, which provides vital support to families under stress and can sometimes be the first port of call for women who are experiencing violent or controlling behaviour in the home.
- Mental health and alcohol and drug services, who see clients who are either experiencing the impact of family violence or who have identified that issues such as harmful substance use are associated with increased risk of violent behaviour.

These are important intervention points, especially for people who may be concerned and seeking help but do not meet the threshold for specialist family violence and support. A comprehensive, client-focussed response needs to incorporate these broader service types and continue support their workforces to be equipped to respond to and recognise risk.

Work should continue on effective justice and housing responses, and to ensure that we can prove a wrap-around service for victim/survivors to support recovery and safety that addressing child-care, employment and education, financial counselling and as well as any required specialist services.

Finally, overwhelming demand, far in excess of the services available, continues to be an issue of concern. While it is acknowledged that there has been significant investment in response to the RCFV, the Commission has also led to a greater understanding of how family violence impacts on a range of service delivery areas, including housing and homelessness, justice and corrections, health, mental health and substance use, as well as the long established connection between family violence and child protection. It is therefore important that investment is continued and maintained, supported by the continued work to build the evidence base and effectiveness that ensures we are getting the best value out of that investment, and achieving long-term improvements in the safety of individuals and the community as a whole.

4 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Consistent with the evidence internationally, Australia has seen rising incidence of family violence associated with the COVID-9 pandemic, as well as the ongoing impact that restrictions on movement outside the home has had on the ability for people to seek help and access services.

AV has successfully introduced on-line models to safely engage with families during the pandemic, including both in family support services and family violence related services such as men's behaviour change groups. The guidance provided by Family Safety Victoria and others over this period has been timely and much appreciated by staff.

The risks associated with these approaches are evident, including the risk that children are exposed to inappropriate information. The expanded use of web- and telephony- based models of engagement does potentially have benefits for some cohorts, and in some cases may result in creating new ways of engaging that may be more, rather than less, accessible for some people in some circumstances.

However, it is important to note that we are yet to establish an evidence base for the costs, risks and benefits associated with these approaches. Further work is needed to identify the best way to utilise on-line and phone-based models to provide safe and confidential access to services. AV supports formal

evaluation of these approaches and models across the sector so that alternative approaches that can provide safe, cost-effective and accessible services in the future can be identified.