

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

### **Submission #100 - Individual – Victim Survivors' Advisory Council**

#### **How has the family violence service system changed since the Royal Commission?**

- What are the major changes in the family violence service system since the Royal Commission into Family Violence made its final report and recommendations in 2016?

As a member of the public what really stood out to me from 2016 was the "call it out" campaign.

This was quite evident to me in public areas and as a Victim/Survivor, this was something I would see and think that domestic violence has been identified as a problem in our society. The advertisements on television, radio and newspapers are important. Raw, real and for all to see and think about. As a viewer the issue is brought straight into our living rooms.

In joining VSAC I have become informed and made aware of the health services, disability services, councils, schools and the police force having received training on and identifying family violence.

My experience of this is whilst advocating for the Speaking out program, I spoke at councils and a WIRE event held for major Australian corporate businesses. We spoke of our domestic violence lived experiences and how major services failed to understand and assist whilst we were in those trying times.

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

Orange door and Safe Steps are good examples. For women and children living in fear at home often find it very difficult to make a phone call or use a computer and have a conversation and ask for help or guidance. These services can help a woman and children in feeling safe.

Please share specific examples or case studies where possible.

#### **Looking forward – what is still required in the family violence system**

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

Children are our future, how we teach and inform them now will change outcomes in the future. I believe a lot more needs to be done at a primary school level. Children and young people need to be educated. Children growing up in a home where one of the parents is abusive, well, they end up growing up thinking that is the norm and end up being abusers themselves. Or vice versa, end up being abused and see this as ok. The education system needs to feed information and knowledge to children so as we can stop the violence early, rather than try to prevent and repair when it may be too late.

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

As a citizen I had not heard of services like Orange Door and Safe Steps, a lot more campaigning needs to be done so as people at risk and living in fear are aware of and can access.

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

The media's role is important and reaches out vastly and needs to help in maintaining social norms. The way they deliver news and the language they use still needs work. Making jokes out of violence or gender issues is just not helping in shaping the social norms.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

- 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?

The pandemic has forced our VSAC meeting be held via Online Team Meetings. I am grateful for the systems at hand that we have and that we can continue to work towards preventing family violence.

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

To me the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the magnitude of family violence. Six women lost their lives in a week only 10 days ago. Through services like 1800RESPECT we hear that calls have increased by 30%. For me this shows the magnitude of family violence and numbers in which we are not aware about. Many women and children are too frightened to speak out.

- Are there any changes resulting from the COVID-10 pandemic that you think should be continued?

### **General Comments**

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

As a child I witnessed my mother being physically abused daily. Being only 12 years old at the time that was all I could see as it was visibly noticeable. As an adult I later realised that she was also living financial, social and psychological abuse. In the end, the abuser took her life and left my siblings and I without a mother. This happened decades ago, but the effects have been with me my entire life. My concerns are the children living in such circumstances. What happens to them? Who protects them? I feel there is not enough being done for the children that are victims of abuse. We need to do much more.

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